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TITLE OF THESIS..AMERICAN DRAMATIC EXPRESSIONISM:
ITS ORIGINS IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY.

UNIVERSITY.....UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA.....

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED..MASTER OF ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED...1973.....

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AMERICAN DRAMATIC EXPRESSIONISM: ITS ORIGINS IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

by

©

W. JAMES PEIRSON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1973

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled ...AMERICAN DRAMATIC EXPRESSIONISM: ITS ORIGINS IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY.....

submitted by ..W. JAMES PEIRSON.....

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of ..ARTS.....

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken initially as an effort to determine the significance of "expressionism" in the plays of Elmer Rice. Early research in this area revealed a general lack of precision in the use of the term expressionism in critical studies of Rice and other American playwrights. In many cases expressionism was used to characterize nothing more specific than a writer's use of non-realistic techniques in dramatizing his ideas and opinions. Equally prevalent was the assumption that, since the non-realistic experiments of writers like Eugene O'Neill, John Howard Lawson and Elmer Rice coincided chronologically with a popular wave "expressionism" in the theatres of Germany, the American dramatists were duplicating the techniques of their German contemporaries. All three of these dramatists initially denied having any interest in, or desire to copy the German originals. As time passed, however, they seemed to equivocate on this: by adopting the term expressionism in subsequent references to their early works, they gave the impression that such plays as The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine were indeed American duplicates of the expressionist prototypes in German drama. But these references did not precede the composition of any of these plays, leaving doubt about the true extent of the German influence and the veracity of the critical assumption that it was the main precedent.

The process of researching expressionism also brought to light the important but commonly overlooked fact that modern psychology informed much of the content and technique of American non-realistic drama. In 1951, after studying the influence of Freud and psycho-

analysis upon twentieth century drama, an American scholar, W. David Sievers, pointed out that American dramatic expressionism owed at least as much to the spread of psychological knowledge in the United States as it did to the European expressionist movement. Ultimately, the aim of this project became that of determining the significance of expressionism in the career of not one, but three dramatists, O'Neill, Lawson and Rice, with the express purpose of discovering the part played by modern psychology in the creative origins of their non-realistic plays. Because American psychology assimilated psychoanalytic theory rapidly after 1912, an effort was made also to determine what possible effect the writings of Freud and his disciples may have had upon O'Neill, Lawson and Rice.

This paper consists of four chapters, the first being an outline of the ideological and stylistic origins of German dramatic expressionism. Chapter Two traces the growth of non-realistic drama in the United States as a reflection of developments in contemporary psychology, and discusses its sudden popularization in 1922-23 as "expressionism." Each of the final two chapters is a detailed analysis of two American "expressionistic" dramas. Chapter Three deals exclusively with Eugene O'Neill and weighs the relative significance of German expressionism and modern psychology in the composition of The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape. John Howard Lawson's Roger Bloomer and Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine are examined in the same manner in the final chapter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank Dr. Ronald Ayling, Associate Professor of English, University of Alberta, for his ideological advice and technical assistance, and for his consistent faith in me and my project.

James Peirson

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INTRODUCTION

The general term "expressionism" has been given to dramas which distort or depart from reality for the purpose of expressing a general truth. This term has larger application than merely psychoanalytic drama. A number of expressionistic plays had as their purpose the satire or social criticism of mechanization in twentieth-century America. Often this purpose was combined with the presentation of unconscious pressures, as in The Adding Machine, Machinal, and The Subway. Although the influence of Strindberg and the German expressionists upon American playwriting in the twenties has been noted by historians of the drama, this study has presented evidence to indicate that many departures from realism during the twenties had as their motivation the exploration of the new psychology of the unconscious.[1]

These lines were written in 1951 by an American scholar, W. David Sievers, who at that time was completing an extensive study of the influence of Freudian psychology upon American drama. Dr. Sievers applied a well-assimilated knowledge of Freud and psychoanalysis to hundreds of American plays written in the period from 1899 to 1939. His basic interest was to establish a chronology of American psychological drama, and to determine the extent to which elements of the content and form of each play may have derived from psychoanalytic theory. This work was originally presented as a doctoral dissertation (University of Southern California, 1951), but it was later expanded into a book called Freud on Broadway (1955) which remains the most comprehensive treatment of this area of dramatic criticism.

The central concern of this paper relates to Dr. Sievers' observations about American dramatic expressionism. Because the focus of his work was psychoanalysis and its influence upon three decades of dramatic literature (1909 - 1939), his remarks about expressionism are incidental to the main body of his inquiry. However, the fact that his

research led him to recognize modern psychology as one of the antecedents of expressionism in America introduces an important and still unexplored part of literary history.

The significance of the term expressionism as it applies to American drama has never been accurately understood. As it is used in most critical works, "expressionism" indicates the qualities of expressive distortion which an author has used in a play to dramatize non-objective reality. While this is a reasonably serviceable general definition for departures from stage realism by writers on both sides of the Atlantic, it is too imprecise for discussions of American drama and leads to an overestimation of the German influence upon American playwriting. A majority of drama historians in the United States view the spread of the "expressionistic" style in the American drama of the 1920's as a transfer of aesthetic principles from the expressionist movement in Germany. The prevalence of the term expressionism in the early commentaries on such plays as Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, or John Howard Lawson's Roger Bloomer and Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine is sufficient to convince many writers that German expressionism was the initial and seminal force behind the development of non-realistic American drama. A critic will say, for instance, that The Adding Machine is "the most effective American employment of the post-war German expressionist technique;" another will point out that The Emperor Jones is "unquestionably expressionistic," resembling From Morn to Midnight, a play by the German writer Georg Kaiser, and yet another will suggest that the form of "Expressionism" in American drama is an "imported product."[2]

The most recent history of American dramatic expressionism,

Mardi Valgemae's Accelerated Grimace (1972), now continues to emphasize the status of the American plays as hybrids of the original European strain. For each American dramatist who has ever had the term expressionism applied to one or more of his experimental dramas, Dr. Valgemae assumes a link with the German movement and supplies as much evidence as he can find to support this assumption.[3] As a result he, like many others, neglects the origins of American expressionism in non-dramatic literature, and tends to underestimate the element of originality in the non-realistic experiments of writers like O'Neill, Lawson and Rice.

The purpose of this study is to challenge the long-standing belief that American dramatic expressionism was primarily a response to German stylistic precedents. Dr. Sievers' discovery of the developmental connection between modern psychology and non-realistic drama will be expanded here as a counterbalance to the older assumption. The opening chapter outlines the ideological development of the expressionist movement in German drama and summarizes its main stylistic features. The aim of this chapter is to provide a background to the discussions of American dramatic expressionism in the following chapters. Chapter Two traces the growth of the concept of the "unconscious" in modern psychology after 1900, showing how it began to influence both the content and form of popular drama in the United States. This chapter has been researched to show how the increasing quantity and quality of non-realistic playwriting in America resulted from the dramatists' interest in psychology, and how it came to be popularized as "expressionism."

Each of the final two chapters are devoted to a close critical

analysis of two of America's earliest "expressionist" plays. Chapter Three examines Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape; Chapter Four is a study of John Howard Lawson's Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice. Each play will be discussed individually from the point of view of how the playwright met the technical problems of writing non-objective drama. The plays will then be compared to determine their relative artistic merits, and the extent to which contemporary psychology and German dramatic expressionism influenced their creation. While looking into the psychological backgrounds of each play, some attention will be given to the particular influence of Freud and psychoanalytic theory. Hopefully these investigations will shed new light upon the ideological and stylistic origins of American "expressionist" drama.

NOTES

[1] W. David Sievers, "An Analysis of the Influence of Freudian Psychology on American Drama, 1909 - 1939" (U. of Southern California, 1951), p. 242.

[2] See Glenn Hughes, A History of the American Theatre, 1700 - 1950 (New York: Samuel French, 1951), p. 402; Peter Bauland, The Hooded Eagle (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse U. Press, 1968), p. 91; Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1925), p. 5. Other references showing similar sentiments will be cited in Chapters Three and Four in connection with playwrights O'Neill, Lawson and Rice.

[3] In addition to O'Neill, Lawson and Rice, Dr. Valgemae traces the German influence in such writers as Edmund Wilson (The Crime in the Whistler Room, 1924), Em Jo Basshe (Adam Solitaire, 1925), e. e. cummings (Him, 1928), and Paul Green (Tread the Green Grass, 1927). See Accelerated Grimace (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1972), pp. 46, 48, 54, 58.

CHAPTER ONE

THE IDEOLOGICAL AND STYLISTIC ORIGINS OF GERMAN DRAMATIC EXPRESSIONISM

John Willett's recent book, Expressionism (1970), now stands as the most comprehensive English language history of the German movement. Willett treats expressionism as a full-scale aesthetic phenomenon, embracing almost every area of artistic pursuit, including poetry, drama, painting and sculpture. His book is filled with the events, dates, personalities and works commonly associated with expressionism and, because of this, it is a valuable reference work. Recognizing the breadth of his subject, Willett devised a three-point definition of expressionism to account for the wide usage of the term in both conversation and critical literature. He defines expressionism as follows:

> 1 a family characteristic of modern Germanic art, literature, music and theatre, from the turn of the century to the present day.
>
> 2 a particular modern German movement which lasted roughly between 1910 and 1922.
>
> 3 a quality of expressive emphasis or distortion which may be found in works of art of any people or period.[1]

The discussion of expressionism in this chapter coincides with the second, more restricted use of the term as defined by Willett, and is concerned strictly with the German drama of the 1910 - 1922 period. This brief outline is intended to provide a frame of reference for the discussion of American dramatic expressionism in the following chapters.[2]

The expressionist style of the war-time and post-war period developed partly out of social and ideological forces within the modern state of Germany after its unification under Bismarck. The decades after 1871 were marked by rapid industrialization, urbanization and growth in international trade. A wave of prosperity came to Germany along with the development of a large factory proletariat and an economically powerful and politically conscious middle class. The rise of the middle class created the "bourgeois" social reality of Wilhelmian Germany into which the expressionist generation was born and from which it was to be seriously alienated.

A common sentiment among expressionist artists and writers was a strong dislike for the German bourgeois. Born in the decade between 1885 and 1895, most of them were in their late teens or early twenties at the outbreak of World War I. Their exposure to middle class life led them, especially in adolescence, to despise the materialism, complacency and romantic patriotism of their fathers' generation. The school system at the Gymnasium level became a symbol of all that they hated in Wilhelmian society. The school with its rigid discipline and rote memorization of classical subject matter was regarded by the young as an extension of parental authority, but it was also an arm of the state, preserving and glorifying the Wilhelmian way of life. A gap between father and son developed during these years and the pain of the estrangement has been recorded in expressionist literature. The Wilhelmian father was unable and unwilling to adjust to the decay of his traditional role as absolute parental authority and the son was unwilling to accept the repressiveness and cultural sterility of his father's world.[3]

The feelings of the expressionist writer were extremely ambivalent. He rejected his own society, yet he passionately desired social acceptance. Like an island apart, the young German had time to reflect and brood upon his situation, developing a sense of isolation and loneliness. He saw the world through the filter of his own desires and needs, and this subjectivism became the point of view of his writings and a trademark of expressionist literature.

In his analytical work, The Writer in Extremis (1959), Walter Sokel places expressionism in the mainstream of aesthetic modernism.[4] According to Sokel, modernism in the arts is the result of a shifting of emphasis in aesthetic theory away from the traditional Aristotelian ideal of art as mimesis (the exact or idealized imitation of nature) toward an ideal of art as synthesis (outward expression of inner nature). Modernism therefore implied a new role for the artist. He would become less passive and more active: instead of receiving the content and form of his art from the model of nature, he would find outward expression for his inner nature, inventing a form to express the hidden content.

The social dilemma and subjective outlook of the expressionist writer fitted him well for this altered, more autonomous role of the artist. Sokel finds the bond between the German artist-intellectual and his society to have been traditionally weak.[5] The German man of letters, in contrast to his counterpart in France, was a man without a milieu, distrustful and untrusted, an outsider looking in. This was particularly true of the expressionist writers who were widely regarded as a group of angry young men who were negatively disposed to the reigning art standards of their time. The expressionist writer's early life

had taught him to seek truth within himself. He distrusted the technological positivism of the nineteenth century with its tendency to equate reality with material progress.[6] He sought to penetrate behind the facade of the material world which he viewed to be untrustworthy, deceptive and superficial. The young writer believed that the only reality he could trust was innerlich--that which was within himself--and that truth manifested itself in his own, more "honest" thoughts and feelings.

The expressionists turned away from Realism and its fashionable variations in Neo-Romanticism and Naturalism, finding their ideals to be inadequate. Their search for a more plastic medium for the expression of thoughts and feelings led them to find precedents in the works of older, accomplished writers. From habitual egocentricity and subjectivism, the expressionists were attracted to champions of individuality such as Whitman, Dostoevsky, and Friedrich Nietzsche.[7] The man whose life and art the playwrights identified with most, however, was the Swedish dramatist, August Strindberg.

Strindberg's technical contributions to drama constitute the most important single influence upon the development of German theatrical expressionism. Nearly all of the most significant aspects of the expressionist style are evident in Strindberg's later plays. The reason for this is partly explained by the fact that, between 1913 and 1916 when many of the earlier expressionist plays were being written, the drama of Strindberg dominated the repertoire of German theatres. Max Reinhardt, director of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, was largely responsible for introducing Strindberg to both German and Swedish audiences.[8] Carl Dahlström states that, in the two seasons, 1913 - 14

and 1914 - 15, there were 1,035 performances of twenty-four Strindberg plays in sixty-two German cities.[9]

The task of outlining the expressionist style can begin with an examination of the two original works that directly informed its development: The Road to Damascus,[10] begun in 1898 and completed in 1901, and A Dream Play, written in late 1901.[11] The Road to Damascus was written shortly after Strindberg's "Inferno period," a time of marital dislocation and extreme emotional distress. It is a group of three plays which marks a new increase in the author's introspective tendencies. In the Foreword to Miss Julie, written in 1888, Strindberg had observed that "the psychological process is what interests people most today,"[12] and it seems to have been one of his own preoccupations at the time. Martin Lamm states that Strindberg kept careful records of his own dreams from the beginning of the "Inferno period" (about 1893),[13] and the To Damascus trilogy marks his first extensive attempt to express private experience in dramatic form. The title of the work is an allusion to the Biblical account of Saint Paul's conversion while travelling to Damascus, and it indicates Strindberg's use of the pilgrimage-journey motif that initiated a similar plot outline later adopted by many expressionist writers.

The Road to Damascus traces the spiritual journey of an enigmatic figure called "the Stranger"[14] through arduous stages of defeat and revision to a final attitude of humility before he enters a monastery. The trilogy becomes a formal presentation of the feelings and reflections of the protagonist whose personal situation governs the unfolding of the action. His journey is shared by a woman, simply named "the Lady," who abandons her husband to marry the Stranger. The

protagonist is a strongly autobiographical figure and the Lady is similarly a composite reconstruction of Strindberg's (mostly unhappy) experiences with women. She shares the Stranger's thoughts and moods and, like the women in Strindberg's life, her role is strangely ambivalent. In spite of being his main source of companionship, her very presence is a source of both comfort and aggravation for him.

Like the Lady, the other figures have significance only vis à vis the protagonist. In Part One of the trilogy the Stranger encounters, on separate occasions, a "Beggar" and a madman. Both of these figures, while apparently separate personalities, resemble the Stranger, thus sharing part of his identity. Recognizing a scar on the Beggar as his own, the Stranger reaches out to touch him to verify his reality, but is filled with forebodings of his own impending beggary. Similarly, the madman named Caesar, a nickname from the Stranger's childhood, seems to mock him for his proud, arrogant past and point forward to his future insanity. The Beggar and the madman thus become projections of the protagonist's inner condition. They are embodied hallucinations of his greatest fears.

A Dream Play is the culmination of technical developments begun in The Road to Damascus. Here a completely hallucinatory atmosphere replaces the realistic setting of the earlier trilogy. In this play the dream, the most subjective of human experiences, is adopted as an all-inclusive formal medium for the play. Strindberg opens the play with a prologue, a celestial dialogue between Indra, the Hindu god of storms and skies, and his daughter who wishes to participate personally in the unfortunate experience of being human. Reincarnated on earth as a woman called Agnes, she dwells among mortals, shares their sorrowful

lot and provides, like the Lady in The Road to Damascus, most of the dialogue of the play.

In an "Author's Note" preceding the play, the audience is forewarned that "anything can happen; everything is possible and probable," and that "a single consciousness holds sway . . . that of the dreamer." Strindberg conceived a typical dream to be a seemingly arbitrary succession of strongly visual situations, accountable to feeling rather than to reason, and pervaded by a tone of melancholy. The dreaming mind ignores the laws of time, space and causality that govern waking life and, in Strindberg's play, fantastic distortions of these laws occur. A young Officer, bouquet in hand, waits for his beloved at an opera house door. She never comes and, in a sequence of stage appearances, he changes visably into a tottering old man. In the play, as in dreams, the figurative becomes literal and idea becomes event: as time flies, so does a schoolboy; a poet bathes in mud to thicken his skin against gadflies; and the twisting of a doorhandle hurts like the twisting of heartstrings. Sometimes feelings are personified: a Lawyer appears whose face is a mask of unspeakable suffering, the accumulated misery of his clients, while Ugly Edith, despair personified, huddles before her piano and buries her face in her hands. The strongly visual quality of dream experience is conveyed partly through the use of mime. In one instance, an opera singer has learned that she is not re-engaged for another season: she enters the stage, weeps silently by the opera house wall, and then passes out of view.

The "single consciousness" that holds sway over the action is invested in the person of Indra's Daughter. Her pilgrimage among men brings her into contact with the other characters of the drama who,

bemused with personal concerns, meet and engage with her in candid but cheerless conversation. Her abiding presence and her compassionate refrain that "human life is pitiable" unifies an otherwise chaotic narrative.

Strindberg wrote A Dream Play as a single act, consisting of fourteen unmarked scenes that blend, one into the other, in swift succession. To make the scenes grow and fade like dream visions, he attempted to streamline the use of stage machinery by suggesting multi-purpose sets, a partitioned stage and selective lighting. Accordingly, a brown cupboard becomes the opera house door, a lime tree serves as a hat rack and later as a candelabra, and an organ is converted into the wall of a grotto. The stage, divided by a movable screen, allows a conversation between Indra's daughter and the young Officer to fade quickly into a domestic scene involving the Officer and his family. Strindberg occasionally avoided the distraction of an opening-closing curtain by recommending a blackout of the stage and the use of a spotlight on an object or character to direct audience attention and maintain continuity of action.

The influence of Strindberg appeared in German playwriting in 1912 with the publication of Reinhard Sorge's play, Der Bettler (The Beggar). In the same year Georg Kaiser composed one of his best-known works, Von Morgens bis Mitternachts (From Morn to Midnight). These plays are constructed in the Strindberg manner around the existential situation of a central figure, displaying his inner life and tracing his progress toward enlightenment. These "station dramas," as they came to be known (The Road to Damascus has a framework following the "stations of the cross"), are peopled with nameless type characters,

designated mainly by how they function in their environment. In The Beggar the protagonist is known variously as the "Poet," "Son," "Youth," or "Beggar," depending upon his social role or status in a particular scene. In Kaiser's play he is an obscure bank official, simply called the "Cashier." Like Strindberg's Beggar or madman, the dramatic antagonists move exclusively within the orbit of the protagonist and serve as foils, reflecting him at each stage of his progress.

The Poet in The Beggar tries to reject financial aid from his patron and, as the Son, poisons his father. Kaiser's Cashier absconds with sixty thousand marks from the bank where he works and abandons his family in wild pursuit of unlived happiness. In each case the reasons for the protagonist's irregular behaviour are rooted in deep-seated desires and needs that demand fulfilment. Yet this is where the similarities between the two plays end. Sorge's protagonist is autobiographical, Kaiser's is not. The Poet in The Beggar is Sorge himself who desires a proletarian theatre so that he can reach the people, but his social instinct remains a subjective wish that does not influence the action of the play. Kaiser's Cashier acts upon his wish and thus becomes a vehicle for an objective statement that money and freedom do not resolve the futilities of life. Kaiser was a versatile and prolific writer who went on to experiment with social and individual issues. Reinhard Sorge did not have a chance to develop further as a playwright; he died at the Western Front in 1916. Sorge's The Beggar closely resembles Strindberg's A Dream Play with the same technical devices of selective lighting and divided stage space to simulate the swift, irregular movements of the mind. Sorge's play is also an example of the autobiographical "Ich-drama" of early expressionism and it thus forms

a strong single link between Strindberg and German playwriting. The private search for mankind's regeneration, as seen in Sorge's work, can be viewed as part of the early unpolitical form of German expressionism.[15]

The content of expressionist drama was drawn from inner experience but the dramatists tended to move away from the direct presentation of this experience toward a more rational kind of drama. This development can be traced in the socially oriented plays of Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller. Kaiser said that writing a play was "thinking a thought through to its conclusion,"[16] and he composed his dramas largely to express intellectual concepts. One example is his play, Gas I (1918), which is built around an imposing central dialectic. In this play the protagonist is the "Billionaire's Son," a regenerate capitalist who tries to defy the whole tendency of modern technology by refusing to rebuild his destroyed gasworks and encouraging his employees to return to a more humane, pastoral life. He is opposed by the "Engineer" who champions the exploited but unthinking masses who prefer the more secure path back to technological slavery. The dialectic thus established by Kaiser enables him to express his conception that ignorance and inertia hinder social progress.

Ernst Toller, like Kaiser, was a dramatist of "ideas". His well-known play Masse-Mensch (Man and the Masses, 1919), also sets up a dialectic between the protagonist, the "Woman," who favours social revolution with reservations for individual justice, and the "Nameless One" who calls for unrestrained insurrection in the cause of future justice. Toller's experiences in the War and as a social revolutionary in Bavaria give authenticity to his handling of such themes. His

passionate language contrasts sharply with Kaiser's terse, calculated prose but, in spite of a few individual differences, both playwrights are true representatives of the later expressionism which may be termed "political" in contrast to the drama of Sorge. They were creators of the expressionist dialectical style, severe critics of technological enslavement, and visionaries devoted to the regeneration of man.

The second most important influence upon the German playwrights came from their older contemporary, Frank Wedekind (1864 - 1918). The plays of Wedekind were written in the 1890's at the time when the Naturalism of Gerhart Hauptmann was beginning to come into vogue. Wedekind's grotesque situations and fantastic scenes seemed to be out of harmony with the time. His best-known play, Fruhlings Erwachen (Spring Awakening, 1891), concerned thematically with a child's struggle toward sexual awareness in a morally repressive society, introduced a new kind of honesty into the theatre which the expressionists admired. Wedekind also set a precedent for anti-bourgeois satire to which the expressionists responded. Like Wedekind, many of them were intent upon attacking middle class materialism and Yvan Goll's Methusalem (1922) is a particularly savage portrait of the "eternal bourgeois," showing him to be vulgar, ignorant and ruthless.

Spring Awakening also heralded what was to become a strong theme running through expressionist drama: the constant disharmony between the young and family-school authority. Wedekind pointed out the fatal error of raising children in ignorance of their sexual nature, depicting an absurdly wrong-headed liaison between a family and the school, and the eventual suicide of one of the male students. Similar themes were used by Heinrich Mann in his novel, Professor Unrat (1905),

and by Walter Hasenclever in his play, Der Sohn (The Son, 1916). In Sorge's The Beggar, family strife takes an oddly compassionate turn. The young Poet, suffering to see his insane father constructing Martian canals in his fevered imagination, poisons him to release him from an intolerable existence.

An important aspect of expressionism is an element of mystical extremism surpassing anything that could be attributed to Strindberg or Wedekind. The expressionists had become impatient with the slow, disciplined processes of reason and claimed for themselves the power of unrestrained irrationalism. In a preface to The Immortals (1918), Yvan Goll asserted that "Truth is not contained in reason,"[17] and later, in a preface to Methusalem, he extolled the power of "alogic" which would expose "the basic sophistry of mathematical logic."[18] The expressionists struggled for ways to express what they regarded to be pure passion and essential truth. In their art they searched for the ultimate Aufbruch, a complete break with their civilized past which would enable them to express themselves in simple, underived forms. Some of the expressionist painters and sculptors admired and emulated African woodcuts and South Pacific sculpture which embodied the ideals of the savage and sublime that they desired to produce in their own art.

In the drama, the quiet incongruities of Strindberg and the grotesqueries of Wedekind received extreme amplification at the hands of the expressionists. Yvan Goll envisioned a revival of the "enormous" drama of Ancient Greece, a drama that would "slay workaday man"[19] and shock him out of his complacency. The intense strivings of German playwrights to dramatize inner feeling was evident as early as

1907 in Oscar Kokoschka's fragment, Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen (Murderer, Hope of Womankind). This short play, a completely abstract dramatization of a demonic, elemental sex-war, depicts a "Man" and a "Woman" symbolically destroying each other amid the chants of opposing male and female choruses. The visually striking costumes, explosive speech and convulsive gestures required in the acting indicated the tone of what was to come in expressionist drama.

Stylistic distortion resulting from expressionist extremism carried over into the dramatic dialogue. Frank Wedekind was the first to develop a mocking imitation of bourgeois speech but this initiative was carried to radical extremes in the plays of Carl Sternheim (1878 - 1942). Sternheim's fiercely cynical imitation of the speech habits of the Prussian middle class, originally intended for satirical purposes, gradually became the model for the "telegram style" dialogues of expressionist drama. The function of language was conceived by the expressionists in terms of bare communication. In Georg Kaiser's words, "What I am unable to deliver in compressed dialogue to my fellow man evaporates into sheer stupidity."[20] In accordance with an ideal of functional simplicity, language was stripped of all modifiers and connecting words, leaving only the essential nouns, verbs and interjections. Defying traditional rules of grammar and syntax, the expressionist poets and playwrights created a terse, epigrammatic style, the complete opposite of the historically accurate, slice-of-life idiom of the Naturalistic writers. The telegram style of the earlier, "naïve"[21] expressionists was carried to extreme rhetorical excesses in such plays as August Stramm's Erwachen (Awakening, 1915) and Hasenclever's Menschen (Humanity, 1918) where sentences were shortened into single,

explosive epithets, pushing the drama toward almost pure pantomime.

The expressionists sought to dramatize non-objective subject matter. They worked with intangibles--ideas, feelings and experiences--materials unknown to audiences conditioned to the realistic theatre. Because they faced the problem of how to project non-physical reality onto the physical stage, the expressionists' drama acquired a certain, almost inevitable abstractness. The expressionist writer reached out toward his audience, urgently striving to communicate his thoughts and feelings, trying to "express" himself as directly as possible.[22] Out of this need for directness, reality was made universal: the name of a man or woman, specifications of date, period or locale were generally avoided as distracting irrelevancies. The expressionist playwright wanted his drama to be arresting, perhaps awesome, but above all, "truthful."

On the printed page much of this drama seems laconic and unmoving but, on the stage, it proved to be remarkably compelling.[23] By shifting the emphasis away from external conflict toward internal conflict, the expressionists created a drama that could have been impoverished by its lack of physical action and event and heavy reliance upon verbal exposition. This potential deficiency was met partly by the revival of theatrical devices of pre-Realistic drama such as the mime, the mask and choral chanting, and this in turn encouraged the development of original experimentation in theatrical arts.[24]

Commentators have also pointed out structural similarities between expressionist drama and the plays of the Medieval morality cycles. The common elements are unmistakable: the spiritual journey motif, the paragon-like protagonist, symbolic type-characterization,

and sustained dialogue and monologue. But the expressionists did not consciously intend to write plays of the Everyman type. The Medieval allegorical drama and the expressionist subjective-intellectual dramas sprang from the same impulse to express the abstract: to dramatize a moral truth or universal idea.

For many years native expressionist playwriting remained unacceptable to German theatre men who felt that the public was not ready for its radical themes and forceful style. Walter Hasenclever's The Son, produced in Dresden in 1916, was the first of the new plays to receive recognition and, in 1917, Max Reinhardt brought expressionism to Berlin in a series of afternoon productions of plays by Sorge, Kaiser, Kokoschka and others.[25] In 1919 expressionism began to ride a wave of popularity and, until 1923, it continued to be the centre of attention for large public audiences. Few of the German plays written between 1911 and 1922 have sustained the initial interest they aroused as theatre pieces but, as dramatic art, they continued to influence writers of later periods and other nationalities.

After 1910, experimentation with introspective drama began to develop in the United States where modern psychology was becoming an important influence upon the public mind. American expressionistic playwriting of the early 1920's can be seen within the broad context of "psychological drama." The next chapter is devoted to showing how this is so.

NOTES

[1] Willett, Expressionism (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 8.

[2] Knowledgable scholars of German literature will find this outline of expressionism to be unduly sketchy and oversimplified, failing to do justice to the multiplicity of individual techniques developed within the movement. The aim here is to provide a succinct general description of "German dramatic expressionism" that can be used to clarify the technical applicability of the term expressionism where it has been applied to American plays.

[3] A good analytical discussion of the intergenerational difficulties of the German middle class family can be found in Egbert Krispyn, Style and Society in German Literary Expressionism (Gainsville: U. of Florida Press, 1964), pp. 8-15.

[4] The Writer in Extremis (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1959), pp. 7-23.

[5] The Writer in Extremis, pp. 14-18.

[6] The term "positivism" is used here to characterize the naïve optimism of late nineteenth century society in which the advancement (and salvation) of mankind was taken as an inexorable consequence of scientific progress. See H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society (New York: Knopf, 1958), pp. 29, 36-41.

[7] Richard Samuel and R. H. Thomas, Expressionism in German Life, Literature and the Theatre (1910 - 1924) (Philadelphia: Albert Saifer, 1971), pp. 113n, 120-1, 20.

[8] Willett, op. cit., p. 54.

[9] Carl Dahlström, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1930), p. 61. See also Willett, p. 122, and Samuel and Thomas, p. 9.

[10] This work is commonly known as To Damascus. The volume referred to in this chapter is Graham Rawson's translation entitled The Road to Damascus (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939).

[11] The seeds of the expressionist style were evident as early as 1888 in Strindberg's "Author's Foreword" to his "Naturalistic" play Miss Julie. Here, he recommended the abolition of the act structure of conventional drama and the reworking of a play into a single, well-knit act. He called for a revival of monologue and mime which had been banished by Realism, recommending also the "asymmetrical" style of Impressionist painting in the designing of sets for Miss Julie. See Six Plays of Strindberg [trans. Elizabeth Sprigge] (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 61-73.

[12] Six Plays of Strindberg, p. 69.

[13] Martin Lamm, Strindberg (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), p. 392.

[14] In some translations of this work the protagonist is identified as "the Unknown."

[15] Other examples of the early, non-political expressionist drama are Hasenclever's Der Sohn (1916) and Kokoschka's Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen (1907).

[16] Georg Kaiser, "Man in the Tunnel," in Walter Sokel, ed., Anthology of German Expressionist Drama (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), p. 12.

[17] Yvan Goll, "Two Superdramas," Anthology of German Expressionist Drama, p. 10.

[18] Yvan Goll, a Preface to Methusalem, in J. M. Ritchie, ed., Seven Expressionist Plays (London: Caldar and Boyars, 1968), p. 80.

[19] Goll, "Two Superdramas," op. cit., p. 10.

[20] Kaiser, "Man in the Tunnel," op. cit., p. 12.

[21] A term used by Walter Sokel to designate the merely rhetorical expressionists whose work resembled that of the eighteenth century "Storm and Stress" writers. See The Writer in Extremis, op. cit., pp. 18-23.

[22] The expressionist writer struggled to communicate with the bourgeois audience and despised it at the same time. Walter Sokel finds such "ambivalence" to be a distinct characteristic of the expressionist Weltanschauung. See The Writer in Extremis, op. cit., pp. 60-1, 48, 20, 66-7.

[23] An indication of this can be seen in the enthusiastic reactions of American theatre critics who visited Germany in the early 1920's to attend a number of expressionistic performances. See Sheldon Cheney, "'Expressionism' in German Theatres and Our Own," New York Times, 30 April 1922, sec. III, pp. 5, 26; Kenneth Macgowan and Robert E. Jones, Continental Stagecraft (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1922), pp. 32-9, 144-56.

[24] Progressive European set designers and directors such as Adolph Appia, Gordon Craig, Leopold Jessner and Max Reinhardt are frequently cited as contributors to the evolution of expressionism's distinctive and striking stage settings. See Sheldon Cheney, The New Movement in the Theatre (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1914), pp. 13-30, 45-63; Kenneth Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), pp. 77-101, and Willett, op. cit., pp. 54-6, 152-3.

[25] Willett, pp. 117-8.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN "PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA" AND ITS POPULARIZATION AS "EXPRESSIONISM"

The urge of the German expressionists to dramatize inner experience derived ideologically from the rising influence of anti-positivistic feeling within the European intellectual community. In the last decades before 1890, a prevailing confidence in society's rapid advancement had been based upon faith in the scientific and technological achievements of man. But this older "positivism" now was meeting with disapproval. It was condemned for being too naïvely optimistic and too superficial in its neglect of the hidden, inner realm of experience.

An important part of this change in the European intellectual climate was an increasing interest in the functions of the mind. In his book, Consciousness and Society (1958), H. Stuart Hughes writes that, by the 1890's,

> . . . the new doctrines were manifestly subjective. Psychological process had replaced external reality as the most pressing topic for investigation. It was no longer what actually existed that seemed most important: it was what men thought existed.[1]

Theories dealing with psychological processes were becoming increasingly more attractive and topical after 1870, and the concept of the unconscious mind became the focus of a growing mass of psychological literature. A large and comprehensive study by Eduard von Hartmann called Philosophy of the Unconscious appeared in 1868, and L. L. Whyte

estimates that fifty thousand Europeans knew the work during the 1870's while at least six other books on the same subject appeared in Europe during that decade.[2]

A corresponding increase in psychological literature dealing with the "subconscious"[3] occurred in the United States after 1900. Around 1905, Joseph Jastrow, a professor of psychology in Wisconsin, published a book and a number of articles in which he contributed his ideas to "the prevalent teachings about the subconscious."[4]

In 1907 The Journal of Abnormal Psychology printed "A Symposium on the Subconscious" which offered a summary of current interpretations of the functions of the mind.[5] One view described the subconscious as an area of active but unfocussed awareness, and another suggested that subconscious ideas were split-off, or "dissociated" parts of the main consciousness. F. W. H. Meyers' influential theory of the "subliminal self" postulated a basic threshold of sensation that separated conscious mental activity (above) from unconscious mental activity (below). Meyers attributed psychic phenomena such as hypnotic suggestion, dreams, and the inspiration of genius, to a welling-up of "subliminal" mental energy. Most of the theorists tended to describe the mind metaphorically, implying that it was a layered entity, consisting of the vast, lower realm of the subconscious and the shallow, upper stratum of conscious awareness.

Some of the contributors to the Symposium felt that current speculation about the subconscious was too purely hypothetical. One of them, Hugo Münsterberg of Harvard University, denied the scientific validity of much of it and argued for psychological theories based upon studies of the physical nervous system.[6] Before 1910 the progress of

American psychology was hampered by a lack of technical knowledge about the origin and mechanics of psychic phenomena. As a result, much of what psychologists had to say was conjectural. William James, who used a non-empirical approach to psychology, occasionally admitted this.[7] Some psychologists became adept at compiling and classifying traditional knowledge of mental behaviour, and the assumed existence of the subconscious was used to "explain" aspects of the mind that resisted precise interpretation. Although the leading theories of the subconscious lacked precision, they tended to inculcate a general notion of a conscious-unconscious dichotomy in the mind that prepared the way for the rapid assimilation of Freudian theory after World War I.

Although psychoanalysis was very slow at first in achieving recognition in America, it eventually became the centre of the established interest in the subconscious. Freud's brief visit to the United States in 1909 passed unnoticed by everyone except for a small group of psychologists who met in Worcester, Massachusetts to hear him speak.[8] The earliest published discussions of his work were confined to technical books and journals but, by the end of the War, psychoanalysis had penetrated into popular literature, artistic and intellectual circles, and even domestic conversation.[9] The older, theoretical concept of the subconscious eventually was subsumed by Freud's treatment of the "unconscious" as a functional part of the personality. Perhaps the most important implications of psychoanalytic theory for American psychology at that time derived from Freud's ability to construct a theoretical system that could be verified through ordinary observations of human behaviour. The younger Americans of the postwar generation

saw this and responded enthusiastically to the scientific aspects of Freud's approach to psychology. Freud's prestige in Europe and his long background in clinical therapy inspired confidence in the authority of his work. Psychoanalysis was at first overrated or unfairly condemned by many who misunderstood or knew too little about it but, by the early 1920's, it was no longer being ignored. Many young intellectuals and writers believed that Freud and his disciples had at last exposed the machinery of the mind.[10]

The non-technical nature of pre-Freudian psychology contributed to its incorporation into contemporary spiritualism and occult philosophy. The existence of the subconscious was taken as proof of a spirit world and it was linked with popular notions of telepathy, clairvoyance, hypnotism and other obscure psychic events. By 1907 the New York theatre industry had begun to exploit the new psychology of the subconscious through its appeal to the bizarre and mysterious. In that year a play called The Witching Hour by Augustus Thomas began a long, profitable run of 212 performances. The Witching Hour presented such intriguing features of the "new psychology" as communication through telepathy, inherited phobia and hypnotic suggestion. In this play the leading character becomes an accomplice to an act of murder because his own desire to perform the act was transmitted telepathically to the actual murderer. At other points in the play, a young man is afflicted by an inherited fear of a cat's-eye scarf pin that once belonged to his father, and a villain is disarmed of his pistol by a "double battery of hypnotism" directed at him from the eyes of his intended victim. Augustus Thomas made a study of "inherited waywardness" in The Harvest Moon (1909), and he completed his excursion into psychological drama

with another "mental suggestion" play called As a Man Thinks (1911).[11]

Hubert Henry Davies portrayed the inherited parasitical tendencies of a middle-aged woman in his humorous play, The Mollusc (1908),[12] while William Vaughan Moody's The Faith Healer (1910)[13] is a serious if dubious study of physical healing through faith and the power of suggestion. David Belasco's play, The Return of Peter Grimm (1911), was an immensely popular treatment of telepathy in which the spirit of the late Peter Grimm returned to walk the stage and influence the thoughts and actions of the living characters. Belasco said that, before writing this play, he had "studied with diligence . . . standard books on psychic phenomena." He also said that he did not undertake to produce Edward Locke's dramatic study of the dual personality, The Case of Becky (1912), until he was "thoroughly familiar" with The Dissociation of a Personality (1906) by American psychologist, Morton Prince.[14]

Before 1912 the interest of American theatre men in the subconscious brought about no significant change in the type of drama being offered to the public. Old superstitions and current misconceptions about psychology simply were added to conventional formulas of playmaking. W. David Sievers has found numerous plays in this period in which psychiatrists and references to the new "mental healing" became elements of melodramatic intrigue.[15] After 1910 a number of so-called "dream plays" began to appear in Broadway playhouses.[16] In these plays the authors tried to project some elements of the inner experience of a dreaming person. In most cases this was done through slight distortions of an otherwise realistic setting. A play by Eleanor Gates called The Poor Little Rich Girl (1913) is an elaborate exercise in pun-

visualization similar to the literalization of metaphor used by Strindberg in A Dream Play. In this play the dramatized dream of a young girl shows, among other things, her hypocritical maid with two faces, her "society" mother behaving as if there was a bee in her bonnet, and her father who is "made of money" clad in a suit covered with dollar signs. Another dream play, Alice Gerstenberg's Alice in Wonderland (1915)[17] required ingenious lighting devices to give the effect of Alice's sudden change in size and the instantaneous appearance and disappearance of the Cheshire Cat.

To dramatize the behaviour of man's inner (and presumably truer) self, some playwrights devised a technique of using two players to represent the dual aspect of a single personality. Alice Gerstenberg's play, Overtones (written in 1912, produced in 1915),[18] consists of two parallel dialogues: the dishonest, polite conversation of two cultured women, Harriet and Margaret, and the open, but honest hostility between their respective "primitive selves" called Hetty and Maggie. A few months after the appearance of Overtones, a play by Owen and Robert Davis called Any House portrayed a man confronted by a vision of his "better self"[19] and, in the same season, The Devil's Garden by Edith Ellis depicted a man in gloomy despair, listening to the audible voice of his accusing conscience.[20]

In 1915 an admiring reviewer of Gerstenberg's Overtones said that the play was of great importance to the stage because it "points the way to new things." "Why not," he asked, "embody, incarnate, and anthropomorphize the subconscious?"[21] During that year Theodore Dreiser published a group of "reading plays" in a volume called Plays of the Natural and Supernatural. One of the dramas, "Laughing Gas," presented

the unconscious state of an anesthetized patient during surgery. Like most of the other plays in the collection, it was a radical departure from realism to the point of being unstagable. Dreiser recognized this, but pointed out in a letter that his work was "an effort at drama outside the ordinary limits of dramatic interpretation."[22] By 1918 the concept of the unconscious had become part of the philosophy of one New York producer. In his little book, How's Your Second Act?, Arthur Hopkins expressed his belief that the best theatre entertainment always struck an unconscious chord in the audience, holding them with a power that could be felt but not understood.[23]

Between 1912 and 1920, then, American dramatists were becoming increasingly more inventive in finding ways to dramatize psychological experience. During these years, however, playwriting of this kind was the exception rather than the rule. The conventional situation-play continued to be the staple form of theatrical entertainment. Except for Dreiser's imaginative "abstract dramas," experiments with dramatic form were tentative and only partially effective. But, in November 1920, the Provincetown Players presented Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones, the first truly successful attempt by an American dramatist to write a play-length dramatic study of psychological conflict. The long monologues, hallucination scenes and mysterious drum beats of Jones fascinated audiences and critics alike, and the play became a sensational artistic--and commercial--success.[24] A year later the Provincetown Players presented Susan Glaspell's The Verge, a sombre dramatic treatment of manic-depressive insanity.[25] The success of The Emperor Jones encouraged Eugene O'Neill to continue his experiments with dramatic form. By the end of 1921, he had written The Hairy Ape, an attempt to

expose the inner dilemmas of modern man.

The popularization of the term expressionism followed directly in the wake of these developments in psychological drama. Expressionism arrived in America in 1921 with the importation of two films from Germany. The first of these, The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, was shown in New York during the first week of April; two months later, local audiences saw a similar film called The Golem. Reviewers in the New York Times were impressed with the "cubistic" and "expressionistic" settings used in the films, such as leaning walls, triangular doorways, striking floor designs and rooftops askew.[26] The two films exhibit many of the technical experiments that theatre craftsmen were beginning to attempt in the United States. American set designers in particular observed in the films new opportunities for the presentation of psychological facts, such as the "madness" of Caligari, the "spirit" of Astaroth animating the Golem (a man of clay), and a pervading atmosphere of the unworldly, bizarre and fantastic.

American references to expressionism before 1922 were concerned mainly with the specifically European developments. Kenneth Macgowan was perhaps the first to discuss it at length, describing the term in The Theatre of Tomorrow (1921) as a "convenient blanket to cover all those methods in modern painting which substitute the formal expression of the artist's emotion for a representation of the object that may have aroused it."[27] He went on to point out "expressionistic" productions in American theatres, noting in particular the stylized sets designed by Robert Edmond Jones for Arthur Hopkins' production of Macbeth in the spring of 1921.[28]

The early months of 1922 marked the rapid and widespread adoption

of expressionism into the critical vocabulary of New York theatre reviewers. On April 30, the New York Times carried Sheldon Cheney's article called "'Expressionism' in German Theatres and Our Own" in which he was perhaps the first to link Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape with the German movement.[29] Also in April, Paul Henckles complained in Theatre Arts Magazine about "that catch-word" expressionism.[30] In July the same magazine published an article by Kenneth Macgowan who had just returned from Europe where, accompanied by Robert Edmond Jones, he attended productions in the leading play-houses of the Continent. Macgowan's article plainly revealed his assumption that O'Neill's The Hairy Ape was "our first produced example of what the Germans call expressionism."[31] Macgowan's Continental Stagecraft (1922) was a collection of impressions and opinions derived from his survey of European theatres. In that volume, "expressionism" was taken to be the very antithesis of old-style "Realism."[32] For Macgowan, as for many others, an understanding of the new tendency in dramatic art turned upon a polarity between "Realism" and "Expressionism," both terms receiving extremely broad definitions and representing all of the old tendencies versus all of the new.[33]

By the beginning of the 1922-23 theatrical season in New York, expressionism was indeed a "catch-word" and the Theatre Guild's production of Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight the previous spring[34] seemed to be a prophecy of what was to come. Many New Yorkers looked to the Theatre Guild for foreign and native experimental dramas and the Guild responded in October with R.U.R. by Karel Capek of Czechoslovakia, and an "expressionistic" production of Ibsen's Peer Gynt in February.[35] Then, in March 1923, the appearance of John Howard Lawson's Roger

Bloomer and The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice seemed to confirm the general opinion that native dramatists were getting in step with the new enthusiasm for expressionism.

The three dramatists, O'Neill, Lawson and Rice, have acknowledged their intention to dramatize psychological states.[36] The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine represent a culmination of the growing inclination among American playwrights to dramatize the non-objective realities of mental experience. At the same time, however, each of these plays share with German expressionist drama a number of common technical features such as distorted settings, monologues and an episodic plot structure. The following chapter takes a close look at Eugene O'Neill's handling of non-realistic techniques in The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape. While comparing the degrees of artistic success achieved in each play, the chapter also tries to show the relative significance of German dramatic expressionism and contemporary psychology in the inception of the plays. An attempt will be made to assess the role of Freud and psychoanalytic literature in the ideological history of the plays.

NOTES

[1] Consciousness and Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 66.

[2] L. L. Whyte, The Unconscious before Freud (New York: Basic Books, 1960), p. 170.

[3] In early American psychological terminology, mental activity below the level of conscious awareness was indicated by the term "subconscious" which continued in currency until it was replaced by the more precise "unconscious" of Freudian theory. See. W. David Sievers, Freud on Broadway (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), p. 27, or Sievers' unpublished thesis, "An Analysis of the Influence of Freudian Psychology on American Drama, 1909 - 1939," (U. of Southern California, 1951), pp. 58-9.

[4] Joseph Jastrow, The Subconscious (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1905); "On the Trail of the Subconscious," Independent, 30 May 1912, vol. 72, pp. 1150-4; "Lapses of Consciousness," Popular Science, Oct. 1905, vol. 67, pp. 481-502. See also James R. Angell, "In the Realm of the Subconscious," rev. of Jastrow's The Subconscious, Dial, 1 Sept. 1906, vol XLI, no. 485, p. 107.

[5] Journal of Abnormal Psychology, April - May 1907, vol. II, pp. 22-43, 58-80.

[6] See also "A Psychologist's Denial of the Existence of the Subconscious," Current Literature, Aug. 1909, vol. 47, pp. 206-8.

[7] William James, Talks to Teachers on Psychology (New York: Henry Holt, 1910), pp. 16-17.

[8] Freud had been invited by G. Stanley Hall to deliver an address on the occasion of Clark University's twenty-fifth anniversary. The lectures of Freud were published in The American Journal of Psychology, April 1910, vol. XXI, no. 2, pp. 181-218.

[9] Frederick Hoffman has documented the gradual absorption of Freud's theories into American intellectual life. Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. Press, 1957), pp. 44-115.

[10] See Floyd Dell, Homecoming (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1933), pp. 293-5; Lincoln Steffans, The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffans (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), pp. 655-6; A. A. Brill, "The Introduction and Development of Freud's Work in the United States," The American Journal of Sociology, Nov. 1939, vol. XLV, no. 3, pp. 318-25.

[11] Augustus Thomas, As a Man Thinks, in Geo. P. Baker, ed., Modern American Plays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), pp. 1-100; The Witching Hour, in Arthur H. Quinn, ed., Representative American Plays (New York: The Century Co., 1917), pp. 763-803.

[12] Hubert Henry Davies, The Mollusc, in The Plays of Hubert Henry Davies, Vol. II (London: Chatto and Windus, 1921), pp. 1-64.

[13] William Vaughan Moody, The Faith Healer, in Arthur H. Quinn, ed., op. cit., pp. 805-39.

[14] David Belasco, The Theatre Through Its Stage Door (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1919), p. 51.

[15] Sievers has tabulated the growing incidence of psychological content in American plays from 1895 to 1939. His tables have been an important guide to the researching of this chapter. W. David Sievers, "An Analysis of the Influence of Freudian Psychology on American Drama, 1909 - 1939," op. cit., pp. 126-83.

[16] Sievers has found a significant link between the increasing influence of Freudian dream theory after the publication of A. A. Brill's translation of The Interpretation of Dreams in 1913, and the sudden proliferation of Broadway "dream plays." W. David Sievers, Freud on Broadway, op. cit., pp. 48-50.

[17] Alice Gerstenberg, Alice in Wonderland, in Stella B. Finny, ed., Plays Old and New (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1928), pp. 151-218.

[18] Alice Gerstenberg, Overtones, in Asa Don Dickinson, ed., Drama [The Pocket University, Vol. XVIII] (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1922), p. 140.

[19] "Any House," rev. of Owen and Robert Davis' Any House, New York Dramatic Mirror, 19 Feb. 1916, vol. 75, p. 8.

[20] "The Devil's Garden," rev. of Edith Ellis' The Devil's Garden, New York Dramatic Mirror, 8 Jan. 1916, vol. 16, p. 8.

[21] "After the Play," rev. of A. Gerstenberg's Overtones, New Republic, 20 Nov. 1915, vol. V, no. 55, p. 74.

[22] Letter from Theodore Dreiser to H. L. Mencken, in Robert H. Elias, ed., Letters of Theodore Dreiser, Vol. I (Philadelphia: U. of Philadelphia Press, 1959), p. 171. Dreiser called the five dramas in his collection "reading plays." See Robert H. Elias, Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 179.

[23] Arthur Hopkins, How's Your Second Act? (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1919), p. 39.

[24] See Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau, eds., The Provincetown (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1931), pp. 62-71.

[25] The setting of the "tower scene" in The Verge, depicting the interior of a twisted, spherical room, was designed to be the objective equivalent of the inner condition of a woman on the verge of insanity. Susan Glaspell, The Verge (London: Ernest Benn, 1924), p. 58.

[26] "A Cubistic Shocker," rev. of The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, New York Times, 20 March 1921, sec. VI, p. 2; rev. of The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, New York Times, 4 April 1921, p. 18; rev. of The Golem, New York Times, 20 June 1921, p. 17.

[27] The Theatre of Tomorrow (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), p. 112.

[28] The Theatre of Tomorrow, pp. 123-5.

[29] "'Expressionism' in German Theatres and Our Own," New York Times, 30 April 1922, sec. III, pp. 5, 26.

[30] Paul Henckles, "Reflection: My Attitude Toward Expressionism on the Stage," Theatre Arts Magazine, April 1922, vol. VI, no. 2, p. 112.

[31] Kenneth Macgowan, "Broadway at the Spring," Theatre Arts Magazine, July 1922, vol. VI, no. 3, p. 187.

[32] Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones, Continental Stagecraft (1922; reissued New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 7.

[33] Continental Stagecraft, pp. 27-39.

[34] See Jack Crawford, "Expressionism on Broadway," rev. of Theatre Guild's production of From Morn to Midnight, Drama, September 1922, vol. XII, pp. 342, 358; Ludwig Lewisohn, "The Empty Road," The Nation, 14 June 1922, vol. 114, no. 2971, p. 726; Roderick Seidenberg, "From Morn to Midnight," New Republic, 12 July 1922, vol. 31, pp. 189-90.

[35] See John Corbin, "Expressionist Ibsen," New York Times, 6 Feb. 1923, p. 14; "Expressionism and 'Peer Gynt'," New York Times, 11 Feb. 1923, sec. VII, p. 1.

[36] Statements made by O'Neill, Lawson and Rice regarding their interest in psychology and German expressionism are examined closely in Chapters Three and Four.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EMPEROR JONES AND THE HAIRY APE: PSYCHOLOGY AND EXPRESSIONISM IN EUGENE O'NEILL'S EARLY WORKS

Eugene O'Neill composed The Emperor Jones in the late summer and early fall of 1920 while he was living in Provincetown. The play is one of three dramas that were completed in the short, intensely productive period that followed the death in August of his father, the actor James O'Neill.[1] The first of the three plays was Anna Christie, a revision of the earlier Chris Christopherson (1919), a romantic play of the sea; O'Neill then composed The Emperor Jones simultaneously with a conventional melodrama called Diff'rent. Unlike anything that had been written by an American dramatist up to that time, The Emperor Jones reflects its author's aggressive independence of the trends and influence of the commercial theatre. Until 1920 O'Neill had been conducting his own apprenticeship as a playwright mostly by writing one-act plays which were usually about life at sea. He had been a moody and restless student of George Pierce Baker's playwriting classes at Harvard during the winter of 1914 - 1915, and the Provincetown Players began producing his plays in 1916 with the very successful Bound East for Cardiff. O'Neill's first full-length play, Beyond the Horizon (written in 1918, produced in 1920), became the first truly "uncontrived"[2] drama to succeed on a Broadway stage, and helped to establish recognition at home for young, native playwrights.

The Emperor Jones records the final hours in the life of a hunted man. The man in this case is Brutus Jones, a vain, avaricious American negro who makes no secret of his ambition to survive and prosper through the accumulation of wealth and personal power. The opening scene of the play consists mainly of dialogue between Jones and a parasitical cockney trader called Smithers who has been exploiting the shrewdness and energy of the resourceful negro. From this dialogue the audience learns that Jones has prospered as "emperor" of a West Indian island by keeping the black population in ignorance, encouraging their superstitious practices, and depositing the national assets in a foreign bank. Jones' background as a negro in America has given him a seemingly valid rationale for his greed:

> JONES . . . You heah what I tells you, Smithers. Dere's little stealin' like you does, and dere's big stealin' like I does. For de little stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' Fame when you croaks. [Reminiscently.] If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact.[3]

Then when Jones hears the slow beating of distant drums, he senses the demise of his personal regime and hurries off in a calculated attempt to penetrate through the nearby tropical forest to the coast where a French gunboat and freedom await him. The following seven scenes relate the progressive undoing of Jones as he loses his way in the trackless forest and describes a complete circle, only to be shot to death by his pursuers at the point where he began.

The external predicament of Jones serves mainly as a vehicle for the unfolding of his inner experience. The mind of Brutus Jones in its two main functions of conceptual thought and emotional response is dis-

played through the use of specific theatrical devices which objectify events that would otherwise be too subjective to be stageworthy. The thoughts of Jones are verbalized into a long, continuous soliloquy that lasts for six scenes from his departure at sunset to his final, penitent ravings at sunrise of the next day. Besides talking to himself, Jones at first addresses the objects about him--the stones, the woods, his feet and a "box of grub" (which he cannot find)--but soon he begins to direct his remarks at the apparitions of his haunted imagination (pp. 188-9). The absence of a second personality during the action of these scenes helps to convey a sense of spontaneity and genuine feeling in the utterances of the man: in effect, Jones is "thinking--and feeling--out loud."

An idea of the man's character was conveyed to the audience even before his first appearance. The audience chamber of the palace with its high ceiling and bare, whitewashed walls clashing with an "eye-smiting" scarlet throne creates a visual analogy to elements of Jones' inner nature: his pride, his flamboyance, and his materialism (p. 173). Similarly, the contrast between Jones in his brilliant uniform and the stoop-shouldered Smithers in his dirty riding suit conveys the sense of self-importance in which the "emperor" indulged.

The feelings of Jones are communicated by means of techniques that are calculated to cause a sympathetic emotional response in the audience. Some months before writing the play, O'Neill had been reading about the importance of drums in the religious feasts of the Congo[4] and he instinctively realized how drum rhythms could be used to advantage in drama. In The Emperor Jones the fact that the distant drums are an integral part of the narrative and setting helps to dis-

guise the essential theatricality of the device. While the sound of the tom-toms outwardly represents the beginnings of the black revolt, the measured beat (72 per minute) becomes the subtle equivalent of Jones' pulse rate which gradually increases with his mounting fear to the frenzied throbbing of desperation. The tone of Jones' voice also induces the audience to empathize with him in his distress and fear. The noticeable change from ringing confidence in the first scene to whimpering incoherence in the seventh promotes a feeling of pathos. At the end of Scene Seven, most of Jones' behaviour is a mixture of pantomime and formless moaning. All that is intelligible is a mystical confession of guilt: "Mercy, Oh Lawd! Mercy! Mercy on dis po' sinner" (p. 201).

Wherever possible O'Neill wove elements of Jones' physical environment into the dramatization of his inner condition. Jones is proud of his harmonious relationship with his natural surroundings. Boasting confidently, "Trees an' me, we'se friends," he dashes into the seemingly solid wall of tropical forest that awaits him (pp. 185-6). But O'Neill shows that Jones cannot distinguish components of the forest's dark interior from the fears within himself. Jones is unnerved by the "ha'nts" that were supposed to trouble only the superstitious "black trash" of the island. The "ha'nts" soon become complete hallucinations to which the forest contributes constituent elements. In the first hallucination, Jones' fears become concrete on the stage as infant-sized, worm-like "Little Formless Fears" that crawl about and try to rise up, mocking him with laughter "like a rustling of leaves" (pp. 189-90). Jones stumbles on and, scene by scene, he hallucinates

successively earlier memories from his personal and racial past.[5] He spends a bullet in his revolver to chase away the ghost of Jeff, an old negro he murdered in a crap game while working as a Pullman porter (p. 192), and another shot dispells a vision of his days as a convict, intimidated by a white guard (pp. 194-5). Each shot of the gun locates Jones for his pursuers, but at the same time restores his contact with reality, giving him confidence to go on. Most of Jones' visions are presented in pantomime in the "ghastly and unreal" light of the full moon.[6] The forest provides a stump upon which Jones and his ancestors are auctioned to white traders; the dense undergrowth supplies an illusion of the "dark, noisesome hold of some ancient vessel," and it finally becomes the scene of a primitive tribal dance, governed by the rhythm of the approaching tom-toms and accompanied by the wail of chained slaves, the hypnotic dance of a witch-doctor, and the moans and shouts of Jones (pp. 196-201).

O'Neill wrote The Hairy Ape during the last three weeks before Christmas of 1921, little more than a year after he finished The Emperor Jones. While he was writing the play, the dramatist told Charles O'Brien Kennedy in a letter that he was constructing The Hairy Ape "along the lines of [The] Emperor Jones."[7] At that time he apparently considered The Hairy Ape an improvement upon the earlier play, and it continued to be one of O'Neill's favourites among the plays he wrote.

In eight scenes The Hairy Ape relates the story of Yank Smith, one of the grimy, powerfully-built coal heavers who inhabit the oppressive stokeholes of transatlantic steamships. The audience first encounters the protagonist in the opening scene as a giant among coal heavers, "broader, fiercer, more truculent" than his fellows, and a

loud anti-intellectual who enjoys his fantasy that he is the force that drives the ship. Yank's fantasy is shattered one day in a chance encounter with Mildred Douglas, the effete daughter of a wealthy steel magnate, who slips at first unnoticed into the stokehole. The expression of horror and loathing on the girl's face shocks Yank into an awareness of the world of decadent capitalism beyond the stokehole. The rest of the play traces Yank's quest for revenge upon the girl, his failures to cope with the society she represents, and his death in the arms of his "brother," a gorilla at the municipal zoo.

In his letter to Kennedy, O'Neill referred to his play as "strong stuff with a kick in each mit,"[8] and he put this conception of the play into effect by means of the strongest dramatic techniques he knew. The Hairy Ape depicts the violent collision of two ways of life to the mutual dismay of the representatives of each. Yank's meeting with the girl gave her the shock of her life and set off a chain of events that eventually destroyed him. The sense of conflict was dramatized mainly through the clashing of personalities, a concentrated use of visual contrasts and persistent repetition of thematic motifs. During the opening scene in the fireman's forecastle, the black, present existence of the coalstokers is contrasted with the better days of the past and a hope for some in the future. Here the protagonist is engaged in fierce opposition to Paddy, an ancient seaman now working himself to death, and to Long, an outspoken Socialist who tries to spark a sense of class awareness among his comrades. A beautiful, poetic reminiscence by Paddy of the days of the clipper ships, and Long's strident appeal to the men to wake up to their exploitation are summarily bawled down by Yank who holds sway over the majority on the authority of his superior

physical strength.[9]

By contrasting the settings of the first two scenes, O'Neill is able to make a telling visual comment on social disparity. The forecastle scene, depicting the men moving about in stooped, "Neanderthal" positions under a low ceiling and sitting on cage-like metallic bunks, is intended to suggest animals imprisoned in the bowels of the earth (p. 207). O'Neill clinches the point by shifting the second scene abruptly to the promenade deck, showing the sunny, fresh environment of the capitalist aristocracy and its two artificial representatives, Mildred and her aunt, engaged in an idle dispute:

> MILDRED. (in a passionless tone) I detest you, Aunt. (Looking at her critically) Do you know what you remind me of? Of a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum tablecloth in the kitchen of a--but the possibilities are wearisome. (She closes her eyes.)
>
> AUNT. (with a bitter laugh) Merci for your candor. But since I am and must be your chaperon--in appearance, at least--let us patch up some sort of armed truce. For my part you are quite free to indulge any pose of eccentricity that beguiles you--as long as you observe the amenities--
>
> MILDRED. (drawling) The inanities? (pp. 218-19)

Perhaps thinking of the success of his drum experiment in Jones, O'Neill tried to organize the third scene of The Hairy Ape into a co-ordinated symphony of light, sound and action. The spectacle of shirtless men labouring amid the measured clanging of furnace doors and the monotonous throbbing of the engines communicates to the audience the feeling of dehumanizing labour. Here, O'Neill repeats his comment on the gap between society's exploiting and exploited classes by setting up a striking chiaroscuro of darkness against light. The murky blackness of the stokehole is broken by intermittent flashes of light from the

opening mouths of the furnace, while the sudden incongruous appearance of a chalk-faced girl in a white dress first suggests the social abstraction that begins to trouble Yank (pp. 222-5).

The last four scenes depict the gradual disintegration of Yank's sense of "belonging" and his increasing realization that he is little more than a "hairy ape." In the fifth scene Yank becomes involved in a bizarre conflict with a group of Fifth Avenue churchgoers who appear on the stage like automatons, walking with rigid, mechanical movements. They seem to be totally indifferent to Yank's presence and unperturbed by his assaults upon them. When Yank punches a "fat, high-hatted, spatted gentleman" in the face with no visible effect, this bit of anti-realism repeats Long's point that one man alone cannot resist the power of capitalism (p. 239). In the sixth and seventh scenes Yank is seen in the prison on Blackwell's Island, and at a labour union local (the I.W.W.) in New York. His experiences at each place teach him that his specialty, brute force, merely makes him more of a brute and less able to cope with the complex system that enslaves him.

The last four scenes are unified mainly by a set of recurring thematic motifs that repeat or expand upon ideas that were established in the first four scenes. In the opening scene Yank believes that he is the personification of the strength of steel (p. 216); in later scenes, however, steel imagery represents not only his strength (pp. 226, 238) but also his imprisonment by the forces around him (pp. 244, 253). From the time that the girl calls Yank a "filthy beast," the "'airy ape" and ape-as-thinker motifs recur to represent his growing identity as a strong but mindless brute. Yank sits in the position of Rodin's Penseur, symbolizing his effort to "t'ink," but it is only a pose and

he is mocked by a chorus of "brazen, metallic" laughter from his associates (pp. 227-9, 239-40). The central theme that man must have a sense of usefulness and self-respect in order to survive is reiterated in phrases that express the need for "belonging." One of O'Neill's personal preoccupations concerned the need to feel wanted, to "belong," and Yank became the crude but capable spokesman of this view. As he says to the gorilla in the last scene:

> . . . I ain't on oith and I ain't in heaven, get me? I'm in de middle tryin' to separate 'em, takin' all de woist punches from bot' of 'em. Maybe dat's what dey call hell, huh? But you, yuh're at de bottom. You belong! (p. 253)

A close look at The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape shows that the two plays do not have as much in common as O'Neill once thought. In both plays distortions of stage realism are used to express abstractions otherwise unstageable, but the difference lies in the way in which the abstractions can be interpreted. The Emperor Jones can be regarded as true "psychological drama" in the sense that distortions of actuality communicate to the audience the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist exactly as they occur. In The Hairy Ape, on the other hand, distortions of reality express the thoughts and feelings of the author rather than the protagonist. The recurring symbolism, exaggerated actions, and unlikely events constitute a dramatized social commentary in which the author states the implications rather than records the events of the protagonist's inner dilemma.

By applying non-realistic techniques more to the explication of Yank's social predicament than to the revelation of his inner conflict, O'Neill lost the dramatic power he was able to generate in The Emperor Jones. There are some moments in The Hairy Ape, especially in the first

and third scenes, where stylization of the action and sets conveys the feelings of imprisonment, fatigue and boredom experienced by the coal stokers, but these are the exceptions rather than the rule. The Emperor Jones builds to a late and powerful climax at the end of the seventh scene; in The Hairy Ape, on the other hand, there is a loss of dramatic tension after the fourth scene when Yank vows to "git square" with the girl. The soliloquy of Brutus Jones is a spontaneous display of confusion and despair, but the shorter, intermittent soliloquies of Yank Smith are conscious rationalizations of despair, showing that, even if Yank is confused about his predicament, O'Neill is not.

A major characteristic of O'Neill as a dramatist was his interest in the relationship of psychology to drama. O'Neill believed that good dramatists were also "intuitively keen analytical psychologists"[10] and he considered it a challenge in writing drama to "express those profound, hidden conflicts of the mind which the probings of psychology continue to disclose to us."[11] O'Neill's interest in the behaviour of the mind is a reflection of his intensely subjective orientation toward life. Always insecure and withdrawn, O'Neill took little interest in politics and world affairs and lived for his art which was for him a way to exorcise his own inner conflicts.[12] When he began to read the plays of August Strindberg in 1912, O'Neill felt strong personal affinities for this strange and lonely man.[13] He admired what he called the "behind life" dramas of the Swedish playwright and desired to write plays with similar psychological depth.[14]

O'Neill regarded his knowledge of psychology to be essentially "intuitive," and insisted that he had no particular interest in any school of psychology. Attempts by critics to link his drama with the

newly influential theories of Freud and his followers always elicited a guarded reaction from O'Neill. Probably because he was concerned that his plays would be assessed as dramatizations of "textbook Freud," O'Neill tried to deter the critics from "psychoanalyzing" his dramas. In 1929, however, in a letter to a graduate student at Northwestern University, O'Neill acknowledged that he was familiar with Freud's Totem and Taboo (1918) and Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1922). He added that, among the psychoanalytic works he knew, he was most interested in Carl Jung's Psychology of the Unconscious (1918)[15] which he probably read while the idea for The Emperor Jones was germinating.[16] It is not surprising that O'Neill would prefer Jung's freely-ranging, slightly mystical teachings to those of the more practical and analytical Freud. Psychology of the Unconscious, an erudite study of psychological archetypes embedded in primitive mythology, is indeed the kind of literature that would appeal to O'Neill.[17] This work also introduces Jung's somewhat dubious theory of archaic racial memory which suggests that every man carries an unconscious residual knowledge of the experiences of his ancestors.

An indication that O'Neill had become interested in this theory appears in Anna Christie, which was composed shortly before The Emperor Jones. In Act Two of this play the opening conversation between Anna and her father, Chris, brings to light their family bond with "Dat ole davil, sea." Anna is a descendant of a long line of seafaring men and her first experience of being near the sea gave her the feeling that she had "come home after a long visit away some place."[18] In The Emperor Jones the protagonist also possesses a part of the "collective unconscious" of his race. His fate corresponds with the psychoanalytic

principle of regression by which a series of frustrations can force a man back into earlier stages of his development. The regression of Jones takes him back not only into his personal past but (as Jung would have it) ultimately into his racial past. The same idea was developed (no doubt purposely) in the story of Yank Smith who regresses hopelessly back to his Darwinian origins. In The Emperor Jones O'Neill uses clothing symbolism to represent the progressive stripping away of the accretions of civilization. The "frippety Emperor trappin's" are cast off, one by one, to represent Jones' psychological retreat into a loincloth savage (p. 225).[19] In The Hairy Ape the same idea was expressed, not by a stripping away of the symbols, but by an accumulation of different variations of the "hairy ape" motif (pp. 230, 238, 245, 249, 252).

In addition to regression and racial memory, The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape contain a few indications of O'Neill's early knowledge of psychoanalysis. The manner of Jones' flight, accompanied by hallucinations of fear, fatigue and hunger, can be seen as a valid dramatization of anxiety hysteria which Freud described in his early publication, Studies in Hysteria (1909).[20] Moreover, the monologue of Jones resembles the psychoanalytic method of "free association," a clinical technique devised by Freud in which a person exposes his mental life through a process of continuous, unselective recollection.[21] Compared with the longer dramas of O'Neill's maturity, however, The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape reveal only a cursory knowledge of psychoanalysis. While such plays as Desire Under the Elms (1924), Strange Interlude (1928), Mourning Becomes Electra (1931) and A Moon for the Misbegotten (1952) have given critics stronger reasons to link

the drama of O'Neill with the psychoanalytic movement,[22] The Emperor Jones and, to a lesser extent, The Hairy Ape nevertheless reveal the presence of Freud and Jung at the roots of American dramatic "expressionism."

From the time that Kenneth Macgowan first used the term expressionism to identify the experimental plays of O'Neill, critics have persisted in assuming that the playwright was trying to adopt the style of the then-popular German movement. This is evident in statements that critics make in passing, such as Joseph Wood Krutch's reference to "the German expressionism of The Hairy Ape," or in the tendency of reviewers like Ludwig Lewisohn to categorize O'Neill's two plays among the "German originals."[23] In 1941 Clara Blackburn used Carl Dahlström's criteria of expressionism[24] to compare some of O'Neill's plays with the drama of Strindberg. Although she found some convincing connections between the two dramatists, her article tends to confuse mere similarity with proof of influence and did not distinguish sufficiently between the drama of Strindberg and that of the German expressionists. In 1962 Louis Broussard doubted that O'Neill was free of the influence of the German writers simply because they intervened chronologically between him and Strindberg.[25] Two recent critical studies of Eugene O'Neill by Clifford Leech and Horst Frenz have used the appellations, "Expressionism" and "Expressionistic Experiments," to designate a distinct period in the playwright's development, but neither of these works show with certainty how the term is historically or technically applicable.[26] During the 1960's, moreover, at least two (unpublished) dissertations were written which maintain the traditional critics' skepticism toward O'Neill's disavowal of the German

influence.[27] Mardi Valgemae's recent history of American dramatic expressionism, Accelerated Grimace (1972), tries very hard to establish a positive connection between the German expressionists (Georg Kaiser in particular) and O'Neill, but fails for lack of conclusive proof.[28]

The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape do in fact resemble in broad outline the plays of German expressionism. O'Neill's plays have the familiar, discursive plot structure of expressionist drama with its series of short, tableau-like scenes, depicting the spiritual journey of a dramatically strong protagonist. The plays also share with expressionism some of its more distinctive features, such as the sustained soliloquy, pantomime, distorted sets, striking costumes and exaggerated action.

O'Neill's adoption of the subjective form of drama was, however, probably first suggested to him through his reading of Strindberg.[29] Strindberg's dramas tended to suggest that long, autobiographical soliloquies and arbitrary exaggerations of outer reality were the natural requisites of subjective drama and this seems to have made an impression upon O'Neill. O'Neill's readiness to adopt the soliloquy in his playwriting was evident as early as 1916 in an experiment with a one-act dramatic monologue called Before Breakfast. This experiment could have been encouraged by a Strindbergian precedent (Before Breakfast resembles Strindberg's The Stronger), but it could also have been another instance of O'Neill's youthful indifference to the norms of the realistic theatre. Similarly, the method of constructing drama in a pattern of short, sequential scenes was originally Strindbergian,[30] but O'Neill was, by 1920, an experienced writer of one-act plays and the construction of The Emperor Jones (longer, but essentially a one-act

play in form) would have been a natural step toward writing full-length plays.

Although O'Neill uses an intense and consciously distorted style in The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, the two plays are not as violently shrill or austere as German expressionism tended to be. O'Neill's efforts to write non-objective drama did not result in a total abandonment of realism as it did with the expressionists. Commentators frequently point out the "expressionistic" type-characterization and artificially stylized speech in The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape but, in spite of his stated anti-realistic sentiments,[31] O'Neill was always inclined toward realism in developing characters and styles of speech. Except for a moment of distorted action in the Fifth Avenue scene and the decorative stylizations of the stokehole, forecastle and prison scenes, The Hairy Ape is a realistic play, populated with reasonably well-developed characters acting and speaking in a plausible manner. The Emperor Jones is a more completely abstract drama than The Hairy Ape but it, too, has well-defined characters and realistic idiomatic speech. O'Neill once stated that he disliked the stark, sketchy characterization of expressionism (he tended to identify the whole movement with Georg Kaiser)[32] and he had already developed an excellent ear for various national and racial dialects.[33] O'Neill was eager to create convincing, psychologically valid characters, and to display his ability to reproduce salty, realistic dialogue; he was not likely to share the ideals of type-characterization and "telegraph-style" diction of German expressionism.

O'Neill also disapproved of the cold, thesis-drama of the kind written by Kaiser, saying that it seemed "too easy." The Hairy Ape is

often cited as a possible descendant of From Morn to Midnight. It may have some elements in common with Kaiser's play, but it was not written with the principles of the German writer in mind. Unlike Kaiser, O'Neill was not a playwright to sacrifice dramatic passion to the ideal of expressing abstract concepts. Except that its distortions tend more to state outward facts than to reveal inward conditions, The Hairy Ape is not a very successful drama of ideas. The vivid characterization, realistic dialogue, and melodramatic pathos of this play tend to interfere with the efficient communication of concepts inherent in the theme.

O'Neill is supposed to have adopted the idea of using masks from the expressionists and applied it in The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape. The Congo Witch Doctor, confronting the hysterical Jones, and the Fifth Avenue churchgoers, the "gaudy marionettes" in The Hairy Ape, are sometimes supposed to be masked figures, but in fact O'Neill originally did not call for masks in either play. The Hairy Ape was staged with masks and, in some "second thoughts" about The Emperor Jones, O'Neill decided that masks would have improved the play,[34] but the initial idea evidently did not derive from an ambition to copy the expressionists. O'Neill's interest in masks was undoubtedly first stimulated through his contact with Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones who were enthusiastic about a revival of masks in the theatre. Macgowan published a book on masks in 1923, and Jones, who had experimented with masks in Arthur Hopkins' 1921 production of Macbeth, interpreted The Hairy Ape "expressionistically" and masks were introduced in that context.[35]

It had not occurred to anyone to classify The Emperor Jones as "expressionistic" when the play first appeared in 1920. When the term

became topical in the early months of 1922, however, reviewers pointed to The Hairy Ape--and ultimately to The Emperor Jones--as proof that O'Neill had been developing such a style all along. But The Emperor Jones could have been written without the author having any specific knowledge of German expressionism. Far from being a duplication of a foreign dramatic style, the play represents the coalescing of several factors: a number of personal experiences, an inclination to dramatize inner reality, respect for and knowledge of Strindberg, and a positive instinct for the stage which made possible the spontaneous creation of a truly original work. The only link between The Emperor Jones and German dramatic expressionism is the common ancestry of Strindberg: beyond that, signs of German influence are coincidental.

The Hairy Ape was written in December of 1921 after O'Neill had formed a warm friendship with Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones, New York's leading exponents of "expressionistic" anti-realism.[36] By this date O'Neill was familiar with Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight and had viewed with some interest a showing of the German film, The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, the previous summer.[37] By the time he wrote The Hairy Ape, O'Neill seems to have acquired a notion of expressionism mainly as a cluster of techniques that could assist him in writing the kind of non-objective drama he had been interested in. The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari would have reinforced his idea that scenic distortion could facilitate the expression of inner truth, and he may have been impressed with the film's striking use of darkness and light contrasts. O'Neill may also have gathered from Macgowan and Jones some idea of how the expressionists used pantomime, choral chanting, man-as-machine and cage-prison imagery, and the use of drama for social commentary.

The Hairy Ape represents a self-conscious attempt to repeat what had been done with brilliant success in The Emperor Jones.[38] O'Neill seems to have thought of The Emperor Jones as a good, first effort which he brought closer to perfection in The Hairy Ape. But the latter play is a relative failure: more overtly philosophical, The Hairy Ape has less dramatic power than The Emperor Jones, tends to be repetitive, and is less convincing as a non-realistic play. The Emperor Jones represents Eugene O'Neill's finest achievement in non-objective drama. The Hairy Ape is an energetic but less successful effort in the same direction.

The next and last chapter will look at John Howard Lawson's Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice, two plays which in 1923 seemed to epitomize the arrival of "expressionism" on the New York stage. Once again, the emphasis will be to weigh the relative significance of German expressionism and contemporary psychology in the ideological and technical genesis of each play.

NOTES

[1] Arthur and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), pp. 431, 435; Jordan Y. Miller, Eugene O'Neill and the American Critic (London: Archon Books, 1962), p. 98.

[2] Gelb, p. 409.

[3] Eugene O'Neill, The Emperor Jones, in The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, Volume Three (New York: Random House, 1928), p. 178. All subsequent page references to this play are from this volume and will be inserted into the text in parentheses.

[4] Barrett H. Clark, Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays (New York: Dover Publications, 1947), p. 72.

[5] O'Neill's earlier experiment with ghostly apparitions in Where the Cross is Made (1919) was not successful, but hallucinations are more convincing in a completely experimental play like The Emperor Jones.

[6] The Provincetown Players presented the pantomimes in silhouette, made possible by the newly installed "sky dome." See Helen Deutsch and Stella Hannau, eds., The Provincetown (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1931), pp. 60-2, and Gelb, op. cit., pp. 444-5.

[7] Clark, op. cit., p. 83; Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama From the Civil War to the Present Day (New York: F. S. Crofts, 1945), p. 183.

[8] Clark, op. cit., p. 83.

[9] Eugene O'Neill, The Hairy Ape, in The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, Volume Three (New York: Random House, 1928), pp. 211-15. All subsequent page references to this play are from this volume and are inserted into the text in parentheses.

[10] Arthur and Barbara Gelb, "As O'Neill Saw the Theatre," New York Times, 12 Nov. 1961, sec. VI, p. 34. O'Neill credited himself with having "intuitive psychological insight." See Arthur H. Nethercott, "O'Neill on Freudianism," Saturday Review of Literature, 28 May 1932, vol. 8, p. 759.

[11] Eugene O'Neill, "Memoranda on Masks" (1932), reprinted in Oscar Cargill, N. B. Fagin and W. J. Fisher, eds., O'Neill and His Plays (New York: New York U. Press, 1961), p. 116.

[12] O'Neill regarded playwriting as a "vacation from living." His experiences as the son of tragically mismatched parents led him to feel unwanted as a child and, as an adult, he took little interest in politics and world affairs, preferring to withdraw from continual contacts with a world that "unsettled" him. See Gelb, O'Neill, op. cit., pp. 234-5, 457, and Louis Sheaffer, O'Neill: Son and Playwright (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), p. 253.

[13] Sheaffer, pp. 252-4, 432; Gelb, 233-4.

[14] Eugene O'Neill, "Strindberg and Our Theatre," in Deutch and Hanau, eds., The Provincetown, op. cit., pp. 191-3.

[15] The dates cited in parentheses for the works of Freud and Jung indicate the year of publication in the United States.

[16] Arthur Nethercott, "O'Neill on Freudianism," op. cit.

[17] O'Neill would have been impressed with Jung's thesis of the universal psychological foundations of great drama, such as the sense of horror the Oedipus tragedy inspired in ancient Greek audiences and continues to inspire in modern man. O'Neill also would have responded to Jung's reference to Friedrich Nietzsche as an independent discoverer of ancestral memory in dream experience. See Jung, Philosophy of the Unconscious (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1919), esp. pp. 3-5, 28-9.

[18] Eugene O'Neill, Anna Christie, in The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, Volume Three (New York: Random House, 1928), p. 28.

[19] Jones is "everyman" (as his name suggests) and his story is told in the traditional pattern of classical tragedy. The stripping away of the gaudy uniform symbolizes not only the loss of Jones' civilized veneer, but also his fall from a position of lofty pride and strength. Similarly the story of Yank in The Hairy Ape was intended to inspire tragic pathos, but it fails because Yank (as an "everyman," his name is "Smith") is not a convincingly sympathetic figure, and he plays no significant part in creating the causes of his destruction.

[20] Freud's collaboration with Josef Breuer, Studies in Hysteria, was available in America in 1909, but there is no real evidence that O'Neill knew the work.

[21] In this instance, the drama of Strindberg seems to have been a more potent influence than psychoanalysis in prompting O'Neill's adoption of dramatic monologue. Free association, however, may have reinforced O'Neill's idea of the connection between monologue and the exposition of subjective reality.

[22] As O'Neill's knowledge of psychoanalysis grew, his drama acquired increasingly greater psychological depth and the influence of Freud in this was unmistakable. W. David Sievers has identified, among other things, the myth of the "primal father" from Freud's Totem and Taboo in Desire Under the Elms, a collision of Freud's Father-God with Jung's Mother-Goddess in Strange Interlude, the Electra incest complex in Mourning Becomes Electra, and a dramatization of Oedipal fixation in A Moon for the Misbegotten. See W. David Sievers, Freud on Broadway (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), pp. 97-133.

[23] Joseph Wood Krutch, American Drama Since 1918 (New York: George Braziller, 1957), p. 80; Ludwig Lewisohn, Expression in America (New York: Harper and Bros., 1932), p. 398.

[24] Carl Dahlström, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1930), p. 80; Clara Blackburn, "Continental Influences on Eugene O'Neill's Expressionistic Dramas," American Literature, 1941, vol. XIII, pp. 109-33.

[25] Louis Broussard, American Drama (Norman: U. of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 12.

[26] Clifford Leech, O'Neill (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), pp. 34-46, and Horst Frenz, Eugene O'Neill (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1971), pp. 29-44. These studies have grouped The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape inappropriately with such plays as All God's Chillun Got Wings (1924), Welded (1924) and The First Man (1921), none of which conform even to a loose definition of expressionism.

[27] Joan Templeton, "Expressionism in British and American Drama" (University of Oregon, 1966), p. 110; Patricia Ingle, "Departures from Realism on the New York Stage, 1919 - 1930" (University of Arkansas, 1965), pp. 835-6, 841. For O'Neill's disavowal, see Barrett H. Clark, op. cit., p. 83.

[28] Mardi Valgemae, Accelerated Grimace (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1972), pp. 34-5. Dr. Valgemae's research on this point is very thorough. However, his only significant finding is a letter from O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan, dated December 24, 1921 (the day after The Hairy Ape was completed) which is the earliest conclusive indication that O'Neill was aware of expressionism.

[29] Frederic Fleisher, "Strindberg and O'Neill," Symposium, Spring 1956, pp. 84-94; Gelb, O'Neill, p. 814.

[30] The first and last scenes of Strindberg's The Road to Damascus (Part One) show the protagonist, the "Stranger," standing alone at a street corner. His circular journey, symbolizing the futility of man's hope for progress, may have suggested to O'Neill the idea of Brutus Jones' circular flight.

[31] See Eugene O'Neill, "Strindberg and Our Theatre" (1924) in Deutsch and Hanau, eds., op. cit., pp. 191-2.

[32] "Eugene O'Neill Talks of His Own and the Plays of Others," New York Herald Tribune, 16 Nov. 1924, sec. VII, p. 14.

[33] In his early sea plays, O'Neill had created such dialects as the London cockney, the Swedish, the Irish, the New York waterfront, and (in The Dreamy Kid, 1919) the American Negro.

[34] Eugene O'Neill, "Memoranda on Masks," "Second Thoughts," "A Dramatist's Notebook," in The American Spectator, Nov. 1932, Dec. 1932, Jan. 1933, respectively. Reprinted in Cargill, Fagin and Fisher, eds., op. cit., pp. 116-22.

[35] Kenneth Macgowan and Herman Rosse, Masks and Demons (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1923); Kenneth Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), pp. 122-6; Gelb, O'Neill, p. 492.

[36] Macgowan had become a friend and correspondent of O'Neill's following the former's favourable reaction to The Emperor Jones. Robert Edmond Jones, Macgowan and O'Neill became the "triumvirate" that revived the defunct Provincetown Players as the "Playwrights' Theatre" in 1923. See Gelb, O'Neill, pp. 446-7, 466, 524-6.

[37] Valgemae, op. cit., p. 34.

[38] O'Neill's letter to Macgowan on December 24, 1921, shows that he was conscious of the expectations of his admirers (Macgowan, at least) who hoped he would write another successful play like The Emperor Jones. See Gelb, O'Neill, p. 490.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROGER BLOOMER AND THE ADDING MACHINE: PSYCHOLOGY AND EXPRESSIONISM IN THE EARLY WORK OF JOHN HOWARD LAWSON AND ELMER RICE

John Howard Lawson was an independent, radically-minded young man in 1914 when he graduated from William's College, took a job as cable editor for Reuter's News Agency in New York, and began to "dabble" in playwriting.[1] When he managed to sell his first play, Standards (unpublished), to George Cohan and Sam Harris, he was encouraged to write more, but two disastrous out-of-town tryouts in the winter of 1916-17 temporarily ended his writing career. Objecting to the War and trying to avoid active service in the trenches, Lawson joined the Norton-Harjes ambulance service in France in the spring of 1917. Around this time he began his plan for Roger Bloomer and, after the armistice, he remained in Paris where he finally completed the play in 1920.

Roger Bloomer is a re-telling of "the commonest American theme--a boy running away from home to go to the big city."[2] The central conflict of the play grows out of the older, established formulas for success in America espoused by Everett Bloomer, a prospering Iowa merchant, and the naïve but insistent belief of his son, Roger, that he must build his own future. The protagonist of the play is conceived as "an average American boy" with a "keen face" and "vigorous character" (p. 3), and the plot of the play traces his journey from the comfortable affluence of his mid-western home, through a series of misadventures in New York,

to his final release from a city prison.

The elder Bloomer and his wife have developed a neurotic notion that their studious, introspective son is somehow "different" from other boys his age, and they undertake to straighten him out by sending him east to Yale University where he can "make good" and "be somebody" (pp. 18, 23). Bloomer contrives to place Roger under the tutelage of Eugene Poppin, the 23-year-old son of an Iowan politician and a Yale senior who will teach the younger boy how to "keep his mouth shut, dress well, [and] make useful friends" (p. 28). Predictably, Roger rejects his ready-made future. He deliberately fails his college entrance exams, befriends Louise, a shop girl employed by his father, and escapes by moonlight from his parents' home, destined for New York.

Roger's romantic conception of a great city is shattered by the sordid urban realities of New York. He encounters loneliness and sexual frustration in his fat, "frumpy" Landlady, he observes the ruthless greed of Wall Street, and he shares the despair and cynicism of a Ragged Man and a prostitute as he wanders penniless in the streets. Louise shares a joyless existence with her aging maiden aunt and, when Roger first visits them at their humble flat, Louise shows that she already has begun to be corrupted by the money-hunger of New York (p. 99). After a scrape with death in a suicide attempt, Roger accompanies Eugene Poppin on a visit to an exclusive millionaires' club and encounters the stifling atmosphere of decadent capitalism (pp. 133-9). Eventually, in complete despair of ever achieving happiness, Louise commits suicide--with more success than Roger--and the hapless boy is held in jail as a material witness. Roger is visited in prison by his flustered father who finds the boy as recalcitrant as ever, and then

hurries away to secure his release by "seeing the right people" (p. 189). Finally Roger lapses into a dream that continues until his release from prison at the end of the play.

Roger Bloomer was intended in part to be an allegory of American life. Lawson's extended stay in Europe increased his objectivity toward his native country and, although his earlier plays contained elements of social commentary, Roger Bloomer became, in the dramatist's words, "my first intelligent effort to use the theatre . . . for the interpretation of the modern scene."[3] Behind the story of Roger is the story of twentieth century America. From before the end of World War I, the United States was emerging from its rural past and rapidly acquiring a modern urban identity. The young Iowa schoolboy, as a "typical" American Everyman, provided the generational and regional perspective needed for such a theme. The boy's migration from west to east reversed the direction taken by his ancestors, and suggested that America was entering into a new and decadent era where the city would become the next enticing frontier.

The action of the play is divided between Excelsior, Iowa (Act I) and New York City (Acts II and III), and the story of Roger unfolds through a chain of thirty-three brief scenes that culminate in a long, but rapidly-played dream sequence. Although the setting of Roger's pilgrimage is the real world in the present time (modern America), the dramatist inserts a number of non-realistic devices and techniques intended to "editorialize" satirically upon the protagonist's environment. In Act I the Bloomers eat with mechanical rhythm (p. 10), conversations are exchanges of empty clichés (sometimes counterpointed, pp. 19-21; 137-9), and Roger has a somewhat "unreal" encounter with the

robot-like College Examiner (pp. 57-61).

The only radically distorted action in the main part of the play, however, occurs in Act II when Louise tries to get Roger a job with her employer, Elliott T. Rumsey. Here the audience is presented with a glimpse of the inner machinery of a Wall Street bureaucracy. Beside the office of Rumsey is a row of five cubicles, all of which are occupied by identical clerks who fumble with paper and answer telephones with perfectly synchronized movements. Rumsey sits in his large cubicle mumbling astronomical figures into a dictaphone and, when Roger and Louise confront him, he uses standardized phrases to refuse employment (pp. 105-110).

Except for the Wall Street incident, the twenty scenes of Acts II and III are conventionally realistic. Until the beginning of the dream sequence, the play tends to become a rather aimless succession of setbacks for the protagonist. Apparently having forgotten his original allegorical intentions, the playwright allows the narrative to get out of control: a side excursion into the story of Louise relates how she attempts to steal three thousand dollars in bonds from her employer, only to be confronted with a marriage proposal by him when she attempts to return the money (pp. 157-65). Roger continues to utter brief and abstract declarations of his will to overcome (pp. 87, 130, 176, 195), and he occasionally indulges in mawkish soliloquies (intended to be passionately lyrical) about "the will of man" (pp. 54-7), New York, the "City of slaves" (pp. 116-8), and the "thrones" and "dusty laws" of society (p. 188). When it seems that another complication would not bring the protagonist's real situation any closer to a final resolution, the dramatic mode shifts abruptly to dream fantasy.

In the dream sequence the action of the play becomes more boldly imaginative and, because of this, it provides greater scope for the abstract speeches and artificial action that hitherto seemed incongruous in a realistic setting. Composed partly in the fashion of Russian ballet,[4] the "nightmare of pursuit" quickens the tempo of the action and propels the play toward its conclusion. However, while the dream sequence is in itself a well-executed piece of non-objective drama, it tends to emphasize the unevenness of the play as a whole, and is not enough to resolve the central theme convincingly. Asking the audience to accept Roger's overnight metamorphosis into manhood, Lawson once again falls back upon unsatisfactory clichés to express hope for the protagonist (and mankind). The jangling of the jailer's keys announces a return to reality and the boy, "still full of dreams," is set free with a reminder that "there's the world out there" (p. 225).

Elmer Rice wrote The Adding Machine in the summer of 1922, about a year and a half after Lawson had completed Roger Bloomer in Paris. At that time, Rice had recently returned east from Hollywood where, for two years, he had been a screen writer for Samuel Goldwyn. Hoping that country life would help him to overcome the sense of creative sterility he acquired from exposure to the film industry, Rice moved with his family to East Hampton, Connecticut. In Minority Report the playwright describes how he suddenly conceived the play, including "characters, plot, incidents, even the title and some of the dialogue,"[5] and completed it in seventeen days of spontaneous writing. Until then Rice's fortunes as a dramatist had been sagging badly. He had been unable to duplicate the remarkable success of his first play, On Trial, and, since 1914, had come to be regarded as a reasonably competent

practitioner of stageworthy melodramas. The Adding Machine was a completely new departure for him, however, and within a few months he managed to interest the Theatre Guild in producing the play.

Like Roger Bloomer, The Adding Machine satirizes twentieth century American life. One of Lawson's satirical targets--the technological enslavement of modern man--became the central theme of Rice's play. The Adding Machine relates the thin, prosaic tale of a department store clerk who murders his boss in a moment of frustration and passes on, after his trial and execution, to another life where he learns the "truth" about himself. The clerk is Mr. Zero, a negative version of the traditional Everyman, who symbolizes in his name and actions the essence of American "white collar" slavery.

The first half of The Adding Machine is a completely original experiment in non-objective dramaturgy. Each of Scenes I through IV is designed to be a dramatic showpiece of the white collar slave mentality in one of its social settings. This effect was achieved through a weakening of the narrative element and a concentrated use of dramatic monologue. The story of Mr. Zero moves forward mainly through brief exchanges in dialogue at the beginning or end of each scene,[6] but the main body of the first four scenes consists of sustained soliloquy.

The opening scene is a display of "Zero-at-home." The "sallow, undersized, and partially bald" form of Zero can be seen lying mutely on a dimly-lighted bed while his wife assaults him with a thirteen hundred-word monologue about her favourite movies and the trials of being his wife. Here Rice exposes the inner life of the middle-aged, middle-class American housewife who escapes her daily grind once a week at the cinema, and rationalizes the failure of her life by habitually

nagging her husband:

> . . . I'd like to know where you'd be without me. An' what have I got to show for it?--slavin' my life away to give you a home. What's in it for me, I'd like to know? But it's my own fault, I guess. I was a fool for marryin' you. If I'd 'a' had any sense, I'd 'a' known what you were from the start. I wish I had it to do over again . . . (p. 5)

Scene II is an exhibit of "Zero-at-work" where the dramatist experiments with a kind of "dual soliloquy" by counterpointing the separate monologues of Zero and his female office assistant, Daisy Diana Dorothea Devore. Sharing the task of totalling the store's daily receipts, Daisy reads the sums from a pile of sales slips on her desk and Zero enters them onto a large, "square" sheet of ledger paper. This routine is broken at first by an irritable exchange between them, but presently, while one of them intones the sums sotto voce,[7] the other lapses into audible reverie. The audience is now presented with its first view of Zero's mentality and its female equivalent in Daisy:

> DAISY. That [movie] the other night--The Devil's Alibi--he put his arms around her--and her head fell back and her eyes closed--like she was in a daze.
>
> ZERO. Just give me about two years and I'll show them birds where they get off.
>
> DAISY. I guess that's what it's like--a kinda daze--when I see them like that I just seem to forget everything.
>
> ZERO. Then me for a place in Jersey. And maybe a little Buick. No tin Lizzie for mine. Wait till I get started--I'll show 'em . . . (p. 12)

In Scene III Rice uses "multiple soliloquy" to reveal a cross-section of Zero society. When Zero arrives home from work, he learns from his wife's opening diatribe that they are "havin' a lot of company," and presently six couples troop onstage and begin to chatter like

machines. At first this activity is dialogue in which each speech is a response to the previous one. Soon, however, the speeches begin merely to accumulate into a catalogue of platitudes about the weather, the movies, the fashions, the economy and reactionary politics, ending in a chorus of general bigotry (p. 19).

Rice then devotes Scene IV entirely to Zero's defense monologue in a "court of justice." By the beginning of this scene, the audience has already seen Zero as a failure in both his personal and professional life. In his loveless marriage he has become a sexual voyeur and chauvinist (pp. 6, 10), hiding behind a facade of false "respectability" (p. 8). At work he is impatient with his peers (p. 7), obsequious toward authority (p. 12), and uses fantasy to gain what his lack of "nerve" denies him (pp. 9, 11).

Since Zero is a specimen and not a hero (or anti-hero) in a traditional sense, Rice does not intend audience sympathy for him. (While sympathy is not intended, it is likely to develop, especially when he quietly endures his wife's nagging, when the Boss fires him, and when he is treated abusively by Lieutenant Charles in Scene VIII.) The Scene IV monologue adds still more evidence of Zero's failure as a man and citizen. Zero regards himself as a "regular guy," but he is in fact lazy-minded, cowardly and socially irresponsible. He is slavishly punctual and "steady" at work (p. 22), but a menace at public gatherings (pp. 23, 24). An incident in the New York subway, related by Zero, provides a comment on the collective morality of "white" America:

> I was readin' about [a lynching] in the subway, see? Right at Times Square where the big crowd gets on. An' all of a sudden this big nigger steps right on my foot. It was lucky for him I didn't have a gun on me. I'd of killed him sure, I guess. I guess he couldn't help it all right on account of the crowd, but a nigger's got no right . . . (p. 24)

The expository function of the soliloquies of Scenes I to IV is supplemented by distortions of the physical setting. A number of non-verbal, non-realistic devices, mainly stylized costumes, sets and acting techniques, are used to fill out the picture of slave society. In the first scene, the cumulative effect of the unsavory Mrs. Zero in her nightgown, curlers and ungartered stockings, the "installment plan" furniture, and the single glaring lightbulb render as instant commentary on the protagonist's home environment. The simplicity of the Scene II setting in which Zero and Daisy sit on elevated stools, hunched over desks lighted by drop-lamps, suggests the utter sterility of their professional lives. This setting is mounted on a portion of the stage that begins to revolve as part of a highly stylized confrontation between Zero and the Boss. When Zero learns that, after twenty five years of service to the store, he is about to be replaced by an adding machine, his inner turmoil is objectified by the sound of swelling music and a cacophony of offstage sound effects (p. 14). The actual murder is not enacted, but a flash of red light followed by sudden darkness hints that blood has been shed.

In the Zero living quarters of Scene III, two symmetrical rows of seven chairs each range along the outer walls which are lined with sheets of foolscap showing Zero's endless calculations. The visiting couples are dressed exactly like the Zeros "in every detail" and they arrive in double ranks, immediately segregating by sex into two circles.

By standardizing the costumes, actions and grouping patterns of the Zero guests, the dramatist creates a pictorial equivalent of the formulaic habits of conformist society.

The same group of six couples constitute the jury of Zero's peers in Scene IV. The courtroom is plain and austere, fitted like a trap with only one door (p. 20). The jury sits impassive and immobile throughout Zero's soliloquy, showing that they are "unmoved" by his plight and blind to the reflection of themselves in him. Their sudden, united shout, "GUILTY!" contrasts sharply with their previous indifference, indicating the cruel irrationality of modern justice.

The second half of The Adding Machine marks a complete change in the playwright's technique. Rice now abandons his experiments with monologue, reverting to dialogue, and using distortions of the physical setting less intensively. In Scenes V to VIII he relies more directly upon the story of Mr. Zero to carry audience interest with the result that the play loses its "constructivist-essay" character and becomes more of a conventional situation drama. In general, the scenes are longer,[8] less freighted with ideological content, and the drama is more dependent upon character interaction.

The fifth scene openly exploits the creature-on-display motif that implicitly informs the technique of the earlier scenes. Zero is presented at the centre of a large elevated cage where he sits eating ham and eggs from a platter on the table in front of him. He is identified as the "North American murderer, Genus homo sapiens" by a uniformed Guide who leads a group of gawking spectators past the cage (p. 26). A conversation between Zero and his wife (who arrives to pay him a final visit) ends in a petty but amusing squabble, indicating the

shallowness of their relationship (pp. 28-32). The scene ends with the arrival of a fantastic figure called "The Fixer" who examines Zero and orders his execution. Except for its miscellaneous comic effect, however, Scene V supplies little further insight into Zero psychology, and could be deleted from a production of the play without harming its overall effectiveness.[9]

Rice maintains the play's non-realistic mode in the last three scenes by treating the story of Zero as a fantasy. Zero's "life-after-death" is depicted successively in a "second-rate graveyard," the idyllic Elysian Fields, and finally in a heavenly way-station, awaiting reincarnation. The graveyard scene is a variation of the theme of slavery already developed through Zero. When Zero climbs out of his grave, stiff with rigor mortis, he encounters the proofreader, Shrdlu (his name is a vertical row of keys on the linotype keyboard), who reveals that he, too, is a murderer. Shrdlu's tale of how he cut his mother's throat instead of the Sunday night leg of lamb parallels the story of Zero, and it enables Rice to include authoritarian religion and filial bondage among the causes of modern slavery (pp. 38-41).

The seventh scene is a well-knit little melodrama with substantial inner unity and genuine pathos. Zero's meeting in Paradise with Daisy Diana Dorothea Devore (with Shrdlu as a doleful third party) does little to advance the plot, but it effectively satirizes the dull sensibilities of the "practical" man. Background music, "sweet" and "distant," can be heard throughout the scene, symbolizing the carefree sense of love and beauty that governs life in Elysium. By bringing out the fact that neither Zero nor Shrdlu can hear it, the playwright demonstrates the untutored sensibilities of people who have never enjoyed

freedom, loved art or practised affection. The mutual confession of love between Zero and Daisy, their riotous dance, and his premature fatigue recall the emotional hunger of their previous existence. The figure of Daisy also serves as a foil to the protagonist. With her shining eyes, pinned-up skirt and tumbling hair (pp. 50, 51), she symbolizes the emotional honesty and courage so conspicuously lacking in Zero. When she becomes the victim of Zero's reasserted "respectability," Daisy gives the play a brief moment of pathos:

> ZERO. Didn't yer hear me say I'm goin'? Good-bye, Miss Devore. I'm goin' to beat it. [He limps off at the right. Daisy follows him slowly.]
>
> DAISY [to Shrdlu]. I won't ever see him again.
>
> SHRDLU. Are you goin' to stay here?
>
> DAISY. It don't make no difference now. Without him I might as well be alive. (p. 54)

In Scene VIII, satire is reduced almost to open polemics. The last segment of Zero's journey occurs at a celestial "service station" where his soul is to be cleaned and re-fitted for another earthly existence. The action consists mainly of a dialogue between Zero and Lieutenant Charles, an ornamental but vaguely authoritative heavenly bureaucrat (an expanded version of "The Fixer" in Scene V) whose task is to tell Zero the "truth" about himself. Technically, Charles functions as a persona for the playwright himself who now discards his previous satirical detachment and enters the play to deliver a final, bitter indictment of the unthinking man. Zero is both the victim and part of the cause of his own enslavement; as Charles says,

> You're a failure, Zero, a failure. A waste product. A slave to a contraption of steel and iron. The animal's instincts, but not his strength and skill. The animal's appetites, but not his unashamed indulgence of them . . . Back you go--back to your sunless groove--the raw material of slums and wars--the ready prey of the first jingo or demagogue or political adventurer who takes the time to play upon your ignorance and credulity and provincialism. You poor, spineless, brainless boob--I'm sorry for you! (p. 61)

To end the play, Rice invents one last exhibition of Zero's gullibility. With a trick of ventriloquism, Charles personifies Zero's only comfort into an imaginary sweetheart called Hope. Ready to believe that this "baby vamp" offers him a reason for living, Zero "stumbles out" in eager pursuit (p. 62).

In content and technique, Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine exemplify the foremost objectives of the younger American dramatists in the post-war period. Writers like O'Neill, Lawson and Rice were adopting non-realistic methods to depict the psychological struggles of the individual, hoping thereby to shed light on the origins of the conflict in the social order. Lawson said that his play was "an attempt to depict the psychological and social situation that a boy like Roger would face at that time."[10] When he took time to think about it, Elmer Rice realized that what he was attempting to do in creating Zero was to portray the man "in his psychological, social and philosophical implications," adding that his method was to discard objective reality "to express the character in terms of his own inner life."[11]

With basically the same intentions, however, the two dramatists were not equally successful. The boldly experimental tactics of the opening scenes of The Adding Machine enabled Rice to combine in Zero a picture of man both as an individual and a type. At one moment Zero is the private man: his thoughts, his fears and his secret desires are

placed in public view. At another moment, however, he is a symbol of an entire milieu, showing its ignorance, its prejudice, and its vulnerability to exploitation. Some of the other characters in The Adding Machine, particularly Mrs. Zero, Daisy and Shrdlu, are extensions of the model established in Zero. They, too, are revealed in both their private and public dimensions, providing additional information and insight into the personality of the modern slave and his social spectrum.

In Roger Bloomer, on the other hand, the protagonist is not successful either as an individual or as a type. Throughout the play's first thirty three short scenes, Lawson's tentative experiments with abstract diction and scenic distortion are not strong or incisive enough to provide any real depth of psychological interpretation. The audience receives relatively little information about Roger's character. They would observe his earnestness, sensitivity and idealism, and his first soliloquy (pp. 54-7) reveals his anxiety about achieving manhood. However, the fact that his speeches are usually cryptic and abstract alienates sympathy and understanding, and he tends to be more of a phantom figure than a believable person. Even the highly stylized Wall Street scene contributes nothing to the dramatist's intended psychological study of Roger. Like the Fifth Avenue scene in The Hairy Ape, it reveals more about the protagonist's environmental predicament than about his inner condition.

The nightmare at the end of Act III however, is the strongest part of the play as psychological drama, and it is significantly indebted to psychoanalysis. When he was asked to comment on the relationship of Freudian theory to his work, Lawson said:

> In Paris after the war . . . I was increasingly familiar with Freud--my most vivid memories are of Totem and Taboo and I also was strongly affected by Frazer's The Golden Bough.[12]

He made no reference to The Interpretation of Dreams (1913), but his handling of the nightmare exhibits many aspects of Freud's descriptions of dream behaviour.

Roger's "nightmare of pursuit" contains elements that are readily recognizable (independently of Freud) as components of dream experience, such as swiftness, pursuit, conflict and a pervasive melancholy tone. The action also has a strongly visual character and, in a manner similar to that of Strindberg's A Dream Play, it ignores laws of time, space and probability, making the figurative become literal and causing widely disparate elements to converge. The nightmare, however, has a wish-fulfilment orientation, obeying the Freudian thesis that dream activity functions to satisfy unconscious (basically sexual) needs and desires.[13]

The dream is divided into three movements or "strophes," each of which is related to one of the protagonist's psychological difficulties. In the first movement, the dreamer strives to resolve his conflicts with authority. When the College Examiner and the Judge appear, authority is equated with "Law" (p. 197); it is then identified with "Death" by a procession of vulture-like creatures that encircle and "threaten" the corpse of Louise in the background (p. 202), and two "Old Women" add a dimension of age and disease by joining into the general dance of horror (p. 200).[14]

The second strophe depicts Roger's confusion of sex with obscenity by engaging him in a struggle with the human representatives of "sinful" sexuality. The Street Walker tries to sell him her services

(p. 209), he is taunted by the Old Women (pp. 211, 213), and Mrs. Bloomer appears and attempts to stifle him with "mother's love" (p. 219). Objects and personalities from Roger's recent past (in Freudian terminology, "residues of the dream day")[15] are incorporated into the action and become instruments of symbolic sexual activity. The Street Walker's flask of liquor grows into an enormous bottle of "Rat Poison" (linked with Roger's suicide attempt, pp. 118, 210) and Roger suddenly acquires a sword to attack his female antagonists, only to discover to his horror that it has turned into a green snake (p. 212).[16]

The unexpected appearance and physical alterations of some of the dream figures corresponds with Freud's concept of "condensation" in which personalities, objects, and object fragments are visually juxtaposed in defiance of waking logic, but in accordance with the "logic" of need and desire.[17] This can be seen in the sudden apparitions of Rumsey, Poppin, and the Ragged Man (pp. 205, 213), the shedding of the vulture's wings (p. 202), and the liquor flask and sword conversions. The metaphor of the "straw man," developed earlier to characterize Eugene Poppin's false identity, is literalized in the dream: a straw-filled effigy of Eugene is dragged onstage, and is shaken and torn apart (p. 208). The straw has been mixed with sand and, at one point, it is forced into Roger's mouth to represent his new realization of life's harsh realities ("sand in the mouth," pp. 77, 217).

In the dream, Roger becomes the man he wants to be. No longer the hesitant, sensitive boy he had been previously, he now defies his adversaries in a manly way. He encourages his fat Landlady to pursue his spiritual foe, Eugene Poppin (p. 206), and conducts himself aggressively, reasserting his intention to take it all "like a man"

(pp. 208, 217, 220).

The last strophe depicts the resurrection of Louise, and fulfils Roger's virginal ideal of love as a pure and invincible force in life.[18] The corpse of Louise suddenly rises from the bier at the back of the stage and, "radiant as an angel," she drives off the lascivious rabble that torment the defiant but beleagured Roger (pp. 220, 223). Representing "the dream that will not die," she appeals to Roger's inner strength, giving him a final injunction to "go it alone" (p. 224).

Psychoanalysis also had formed part of the ideological background of The Adding Machine without Elmer Rice being initially aware of its presence. When he was first approached by W. David Sievers in 1950 to comment on the possible influence of psychoanalytic theory upon his work, Rice had little to say.[19] Soon after that, however, he gave more serious thought to the question and told Dr. Sievers in a letter that he had begun reading Freud, as well as Jung, Adler, Ferenczi and others, at the beginning of his writing career (about 1913).[20] Then, in 1955, Rice wrote an article called "American Theatre and the Human Spirit" in which he pointed out how psychoanalysis had permeated the public mind and contributed to the destruction of the ideal tragic hero of traditional drama.[21] In his book, The Living Theatre (1959), Rice further recognized (probably from Sievers' initial suggestion)[22] the significance of Freudian theory for the development of psychological drama in America, and particularly as a factor in the outgrowth of the so-called "expressionist" plays of Dreiser, Glaspell, O'Neill and Lawson.[23]

No part of The Adding Machine could be described as a deliberate or conscious adaptation of Freudian concepts to dramatic writing, but

many of the dramatist's insights into the character of Zero suggest a good background knowledge of psychoanalysis. Rice's presentation of the Zero mentality is a valid study of sexual repression, showing a number of behavioral symptoms which Freud has described in his early work on hysteria and anxiety neurosis.[24] The most notable of these symptoms is the tendency to withdraw from reality, employing mechanisms of escape such as the cinema, wish-fulfilling fantasy, and the pose of "respectability" (p. 6). Zero's ego is poorly developed, and this is evident in his lack of confidence (his self-effacing behaviour toward the Boss, p. 12) and his misplaced sense of identity (he attempts to link it with a scrapbook filled with newspaper clippings about himself, p. 31). Zero harbours sexual guilt feelings (p. 52), he suffers from the failure of his will (p. 9), and he is susceptible to irrational anti-social behaviour (pp. 14, 23)--all of which have been described by Freud as symptoms of a repressed libido.[25]

In creating the proofreader, Shrdlu, Rice demonstrates the concept of Oedipal dependency and the violent rebellion that may result from it.[26] The function of the family pastor, Dr. Amaranth, in the life of Shrdlu also suggests the role of the authoritarian father figure in Freud's analysis of religion and society (pp. 40-1, 43).[27]

Although it may never be proven conclusively, there is a possibility that a knowledge of Freud's clinical technique of free association may have prompted and informed the use of soliloquy in The Adding Machine. The second scene of the play is a well-handled instance of "free associating" drama, revealing a death wish in Daisy and a typical "Freudian slip" by Zero. Daisy forms her thoughts into newspaper headlines, wondering if her suicide would be enough to make anyone care and,

instead of repeating Daisy's sums, Zero blurts out, "eighty-seven dollars"--the cost of an annoying doctor's bill--and makes a mistake in his calculations (pp. 8, 9).

By showing the social implications of repression in the individual, The Adding Machine anticipates the development of neo-Freudian social theory. In some remarks to Heywood Broun in 1923, Rice said:

> In The Adding Machine I have tried to show how the Zero psychology reacts to this ideal of freedom. Unless I have hit very wide of the mark, the Zero psychology is the slave psychology. And the one thing that the slave hates and fears beyond all other things is liberty. For the slave senses unconsciously that authority means not only exemption from thought, but security. The power which enslaves him protects him as well. Thrown upon his own devices, he would not long survive. The demand for laws, for policemen, for armies is actuated almost always by a consciousness of inferiority . . .[28]

Almost a quarter of a century before Erich Fromm,[29] Rice showed that a repressive authoritarian ethic has stifled the intellectual, emotional and moral growth of the individual and, as a consequence, has fostered an insecure and essentially neurotic society.[30] Rice also makes a concession to Freud's emphasis upon childhood experience as the root of man's inadequacy (pp. 59-60) but, like Fromm, he insists that the ultimate responsibility for personal and social reform lies in the hands of the private individual.

Roger Bloomer was first produced by the prestigious Equity Players and it opened at the Equity Forty-eighth Street Theatre on March 1, 1923. On March 19 the Theatre Guild presented The Adding Machine at the Garrick Theatre and the two plays then ran concurrently for a few weeks.[31] Almost all of the earliest critical reactions to the plays made reference to the "expressionism" and "expressionistic" methods of Lawson and Rice, and the most noteworthy of these were the reviews

of John Corbin (New York Times), Stark Young (The Nation), and Ludwig Lewisohn (New Republic). Evidently following the lead of Kenneth Macgowan,[32] Corbin showed great interest in expressionism as a dramatic technique and his enthusiasm for it influenced his judgements (mostly negative) of Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine.[33] Stark Young felt that Lawson's play failed to fulfil the promise of its expressionistic method, and he insisted that The Adding Machine was written to meet a market demand for expressionism.[34] Without showing how, Ludwig Lewisohn stated that Roger Bloomer was "somewhat derivative" of Hasenclever's Der Sohn, and he felt that, as "expresionist" drama, The Adding Machine showed a firmer grasp of its intellectual content than was evident in O'Neill's The Hairy Ape.[35]

Like O'Neill, Lawson and Rice immediately reacted against intimations that they had written their plays according to formulas of popular expressionism. To the drama editor of the New York Times Lawson said, "When I wrote 'Roger Bloomer' I was amazed to find it described as 'expressionism.' I made a hasty canvass of my friends to find out what 'expressionism' was."[36] Two weeks later, Rice wrote to the same editor, saying that, to him, expressionism was "little more than a convenient label," and added that he wrote the play exactly as he conceived it, "without thought of theories of technique . . . without rationalizing about it at all."[37]

In spite of the playwrights' initial denials, the term expressionism has remained the principle generic classification of the two plays, and a number of critics have assumed that Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine are American hybrids of the original expressionist dramas of Germany. In 1926 George Jean Nathan referred to Roger Bloomer as

"an attempt to see New York through the eyes of a Georg Kaiser or Walter Hasenklever [sic]."[38] Montrose Moses referred to Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine in his 1925 history of American drama as "adaptations of a foreign model,"[39] and Clifford Leech has described Rice's play rather unfairly as a good instance of what happens when German expressionism is "simply Americanized."[40] Mardi Valgemae's Accelerated Grimace (1972), now adds to the general concensus that Lawson and Rice were applying borrowed techniques. Valgemae generally infers, without conclusive proof,[41] the discipleship of the Americans to the German writers.

Drama critics have had good reason to point out the close parallels between the American and German dramas. In theme, construction and technique, Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine do indeed share a number of common attributes with German expressionism. Both plays are constructed in the pattern of a spiritual odyssey, depicting the progress-toward-enlightenment of a dramatically strong protagonist. In addition, stylizations of settings, speeches and costumes are used to create a simplified, symbolic action: dialogue is subject to radical experiment, characters are reduced to types (or were intended to be), and the action frequently gives way to sustained soliloquy or is standardized into formulaic patterns. Thematically, Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine are concerned with the problems of the individual in a materialistic age, and they share with German expresionist drama a common hope for the regeneration of man.

And yet, how much of this is a reflection of the German ideological and stylistic precedent? Have the critics been right in assuming--or have the dramatists been sincere in denying--the importance of the

foreign influence? The enquiry yields substantially different conclusions for each of the two dramatists.

Since 1923 John Howard Lawson has provided scholars with background information regarding Roger Bloomer and, in effect, has reversed his denial of "expressionist" intention. In 1964 he told Richard Peyron Brown that, while living in Paris after the War, he and John Dos Passos attended several performances of Les Ratés (Failures) by the so-called "French expressionist" Henri Lenormand, adding that the play had a significant influence on the final form of Roger Bloomer.[42] Lawson mentioned to Mardi Valgemae in 1964 that, prior to writing the play, he had read the plays of Toller and Wedekind.[43] In a letter to the present writer, the author recalls that he was familiar with European expressionism from his college days:

> I wrote an article on the subject (chiefly, I think, on Wedekind) in the student monthly magazine . . . in which I also wrote on the Armoury Show in New York and the new technique of films.[44]

Lawson also mentioned that the dream at the end of Roger Bloomer represents "a conscious break with what [he] conceived to be expressionism," implying that the earlier part of the play was composed with the techniques of the German writers in mind. In reading Wedekind's bitter anti-bourgeois satires and the early plays of Toller, a young writer like Lawson would have responded to the urgency of the German dramatists' social message. Like many of his American companions in Europe during and after the war, Lawson had activist leanings, and whatever exposure he had to the drama of Ernst Toller would have stimulated his growing interest in Socialism.[45]

Lawson's statement that he knew the work of Frank Wedekind sheds some light on the stylistic and ideological origins of Roger Bloomer.

In a sense, Lawson's Roger can be seen as the American cousin of Melchior Gabor in Wedekind's Spring Awakening. Surrounded by the repressive authority of their bourgeois milieu, Roger and Melchior are engaged in a desperate struggle to achieve an adult identity. In much the same manner as Wedekind, Lawson champions the cause of the youth in their battle against the entrenched power and privilege of aging social authorities. Roger and Louise, like the children in Spring Awakening, have been raised in ignorance of their sexual nature by a society that refuses to distinguish between sex and obscenity. The coming of spring symbolizes the first upsurge of adolescent sexuality (pp. 9, 62), but the ignorance of the young and the repression of their elders confounds their efforts to cope with it and leads to desperation and suicide.

Lawson's satire of the American bourgeois has the cynical overtones characteristic of Wedekind. Parents and social authorities are made to look as unenlightened, petty and ridiculous as possible. Mrs. Bloomer resembles Mrs. Bergman in Spring Awakening who cannot see her child as anything but a baby; the College Examiner and Judge recall the absurdly reactionary school officials and family magistrate in Wedekind's play; Bloomer and Poppin, dressed in "flapping," "gaudy" suits, speak the fragmented, platitudinous prose devised by Wedekind to imitate the hated bourgeois.

The action of a Wedekind or Toller play moves freely through numerous episodes of widely varying times and locales, resembling the swiftness and range of mental activity. Lawson's provisions for a smooth, workable stage machinery to accommodate the numerous scenes of Roger Bloomer seem to have been devised for a similar effect. His suggestions for stage settings and acting styles invoke the expression-

ist style, calling for non-realistic action (p. xi), "geometrical" designs (p. 85) and sharp dark-light contrasts (pp. 85, 157). To give the play a sense of balanced, musical rhythm, Lawson made use of recurring leitmotifs.[46] Phrases such as "business . . . spread . . . spread!" (pp. 7, 29), "women, death and garbage" (pp. 114, 124, 213, 215), "face the music" (pp. 66, 225) and many others are distributed throughout the play to stress the "manhood" theme or add to the satire of social decadence. The rhythm of Roger Bloomer was intended to correspond to the sound of "marching feet," and the play ends (rather like a play by Toller) on a note of hopefulness with a reference to a "new song" (p. 222).[47]

Unlike Lawson, Elmer Rice never changed his position on the subject of foreign influence, particularly where it applied to the composition of The Adding Machine. He said in Minority Report that, although he had heard of expressionism, it was not until after writing The Adding Machine that he became familiar with the German movement, and he has argued consistently along these lines in spite of the skepticism of the critics.[48] His consistency tends to confirm the sincerity of his 1923 denial and, if his report of the speed and spontaneity of the play's composition can be taken as true, he evidently was not consciously attempting to fit his material to an established form and style. Apart from his recognition of the unconscious influence of Freud, the only concession Rice ever made to outside influence was a recollection that he had seen and was impressed with a showing of The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari while he was working in California. In a letter to Mardi Valgemae in 1964, he said:

I did see The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, at a private screening in the Goldwyn studio, in Culver City, in 1919 or 1920. Most of my colleagues scoffed at it, but I was greatly impressed with the film (as I have been upon subsequent viewings). I certainly did not have the film in mind when I wrote The Adding Machine, though what its unconscious influence may have been, it is, of course, impossible for me to know.[49]

The Adding Machine's "station-drama" form tends, however, to align the play with German expressionism in a way that seems to be more than purely coincidental. Rice's play has much in common, for instance, with Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight: the little exploited clerk, the irrational lunge at freedom, settings symbolic of the man's inner state, the sustained soliloquies, and the deeply pessimistic social outlook. In view of this, there remains a remote possibility (which Rice never admitted) that the playwright had seen the Theatre Guild's production of Kaiser's play in the early summer of 1922 while He was living in New York, prior to moving to East Hampton. The exact date of the composition of The Adding Machine is not known, but it seems possible that Kaiser's play may have suggested a basic form for the social satire that Rice had been planning for months, and thereby sparked the play's rapid composition. Rice would not have wanted to claim a debt to Kaiser--or to anyone--for a play that meant so much to him as did The Adding Machine in terms of its creative originality.[50] He probably also felt that, if the critics isolated any single ideological or stylistic influence without accounting for the numerous other factors involved in its inception, they would do the play an injustice and not "properly" appreciate its originality.[51]

In its theme, content and technique, The Adding Machine is a product of many factors traceable either to outside influence or originality, and these include elements of personal experience, accumulated

technical knowledge, social philosophy and inventive skill. By 1922 Rice had a well-developed social conscience. When he was young, he was fascinated with the theatre and read large quantities of dramatic literature including, among others, the plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann and Pinero, but he was attracted most to the social "problem plays" of Galsworthy and Shaw.[52] Although he never experienced in America a sense of alienation equivalent to that of the expressionist generation in Germany, Rice always reacted strongly to social injustice and exploitation.[53] At fourteen, as an office boy for a jobbing firm, he first encountered the stifling monotony of office routine, sharing duties with the lowly clerks who squirmed under their employers' eyes and mixed their labours with a perpetual banter on sexual themes.[54]

As a young writer, Rice did not need the German expressionists to inculcate in him a contempt for the materialistic middle class. By the time he wrote The Adding Machine, Rice had his own, deeply personal "anti-bourgeois" attitude which had begun with his adolescent rejection of his family (especially his father)[55] and was aggravated by his experience as a screen writer in Los Angeles. His attack upon the "consumer's mentality," the ignorance and conformity of the middle class was partly a reaction to the film industry's cynical estimation of the public mind, and the complicity of the public in supporting the industry through its compulsive search for escapist entertainment.[56]

Like Eugene O'Neill, Rice had become interested in non-objective drama quite independently of the expressionist experiments in Germany. As early as 1913 he had seen and admired Arthur Hopkins' production of Gerstenberg's quasi-subjective Poor Little Rich Girl.[57] His first play, On Trial (1914) succeeded mainly through the novelty of the "flashback"

device (dramatized memory) which Hopkins ingeniously staged on an adjustable "jacknife" platform.[58] Rice learned a great deal from Hopkins about the dramatic values of mobile platforms and this no doubt encouraged him to suggest a rotating stage for the intensely stylized murder scene of The Adding Machine.

Beyond this, however, little is known of Rice's knowledge and appreciation of experimental non-objective drama. He would have known O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, and his letter to the New York Times drama editor in 1923 indicates some familiarity with Wedekind's Spring Awakening and a fantasy called Liliom by the Hungarian dramatist, Ferenc Molnar.[59] If his viewing of The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari suggested anything to him at all, it would have been the importance of scenic distortion for the dramatization of psychological states. The author of The Adding Machine, however, deserves the benefit of any doubt arising from the controversy over the play's "expressionist" origins. Whatever precedents Rice may have known in the drama of European or native writers, his play is more than a typical "expressionist experiment": it is a unique and important contribution to American social satire.

After several weeks of consultation with the Theatre Guild production staff who showed him the "expressionistic" merits of his play,[60] Rice began writing The Subway, hoping to repeat the artistic success of The Adding Machine. He was unable to do so: consciously applying the expressionistic technique as he now understood it,[61] his approach slipped back into the conventional mode of drama-by-situation. The Subway dwells upon the plight of a lonely, virginal clerk called Sophie Smith whose humble ambitions for a happy domestic life are

destroyed by the indifference of her family and the designs of lecherous men. In spite of the "expressionist" techniques inserted into the narrative (masks, transparent walls, soliloquies, fragmented prose), the play never loses its realistic dimensions and develops into a rather unsatisfactory, sentimental melodrama.[62]

Ironically, Lawson's experience was the reverse of Rice's. Striving to move away from a prepared notion of expressionism, he enjoyed a degree of real success in his next play. Processional (written in 1921, produced in 1925) is a bold and wholly unconventional play, portraying a "procession" of typically American personalities and events, continuously crossing the stage. The play was an experiment with what Lawson called "a sort of 'multi-theatre' or 'mixed media'."[63] To represent the formless mingling of tragedy and comedy in the lives of ordinary Americans, the dramatist used a wide variety of dramatic devices, mainly vaudeville caricature, melodrama, burlesque, and a background of jazz music.[64] Processional, however, is not particularly "expressionistic" (it exhibits few of the specific traits of German expressionism), and its importance to American drama lies in the vigor and freshness of its style.[65]

After The Subway Rice's only major effort to compose in a consciously non-realistic form was Dream Girl, a play he wrote in 1945 to provide a major role for his second wife, Betty Field.[66] Here again, Rice was unable to achieve the psychological depth and satirical scope of The Adding Machine. It seems that, whenever he was writing in a completely original vein, Rice scored his most notable successes as a dramatist. In 1925 he wrote "The Sidewalks of New York," a collage of one-act "plays without words"[67] in which he tried to personify a great

city, capture its moods, and show the diversity of human life within it. This little experiment was later expanded into a full-length play called Street Scene (1929). In this play, Rice proved his ability to write melodrama at its best, developing each character fully, creating authentic idiomatic dialogue, and generating strong pathos. In contrast to The Adding Machine, Street Scene was written in a sharply realistic style which frequently has been described as "slice-of-life" naturalism.[68] Street Scene and The Adding Machine are by far the best plays by Elmer Rice, and together they constitute his claim to be remembered as one of America's leading twentieth century playwrights.[69]

Lawson became one of the founders of the left-wing New Playwrights Theatre that was formed in 1927 and struggled for three seasons to introduce a kind of "proletarian" theatre into America. Most of the plays presented by this group were radically experimental and strongly political in tone.[70] Lawson's offerings to the New Playwrights were Loudspeaker (1927) and The International (1928), both of which were energetic experiments in form and content. When the New Playwrights disbanded in 1929, Lawson turned to screenwriting, hopeful that the cinema would provide him with new opportunities to develop as a writer. In the same year, American dramatic expressionism went into eclipse: the general concensus was that the "expressionist" and "constructivist" styles of the New Playwrights were now passé,[71] and the public had lost its interest in drama of social reform.

NOTES

[1] Most of the biographical information used in this discussion of Lawson is from Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., Authors: Today and Yesterday (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1933), pp. 396-7; Twentieth Century Authors (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1942), pp. 799-800.

[2] John Dos Passos, "Foreword" to Lawson's Roger Bloomer (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1923), p. vi. All subsequent page references to this volume are located in the text in parentheses.

[3] Kunitz and Haycraft, eds., Authors: Today and Yesterday, pp. 396-7.

[4] A letter from John Howard Lawson to J. Peirson, March 6, 1973. Lawson cited Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps as a "major influence" upon his theatrical aims.

[5] Elmer L. Rice, Minority Report (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 189.

[6] Elmer L. Rice, The Adding Machine, in Elmer Rice: Three Plays (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), pp. 7, 13, 20. All subsequent page references to The Adding Machine are from this volume and are located in the text in parentheses.

[7] This technique was developed during the stage preparation of the play in 1923 and made Scene II the most effective part of the play as theatrical satire. See Robert Hogan, The Independence of Elmer Rice (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1965), p. 35.

[8] The average length of each of the last four scenes is nearly double that of the first four.

[9] It was not included in the 1923 production, but Rice always seemed to prefer that the scene be retained. See Minority Report, op. cit., p. 193, and William R. Elwood, "An Interview with Elmer Rice on Expressionism," Educational Theatre Journal, March 1968, vol. XX, no. 1, p. 2.

[10] Richard Peyron Brown, "John Howard Lawson as an Activist Playwright," Ph. D. dissertation (Tulane University, 1965), p. 34.

[11] Montrose J. Moses, "Elmer Rice: A Dramatist Who Evokes Poetic Overtones Out of the City Streets," Theatre Guild Magazine, Sept. 1930, vol. VII, p. 17; Minority Report, op. cit., p. 199.

[12] Letter to J. Peirson, March 6, 1973. Frazer's The Golden Bough also provided some of the anthropological background to Freud's study of sexual taboos in primitive societies. See Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo [trans. A. A. Brill] (New York: Knopf and Random House, 1918, 1946), pp. 194-5.

[13] See Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams [trans. A. A. Brill] (New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 165, and Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex (New York: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 74-6.

[14] Freud has pointed out the sexual significance of large birds (vultures) as dream symbols. Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), pp. 32-42.

[15] The Interpretation of Dreams, op. cit., pp. 510-16.

[16] Swords and snakes are archetypal Freudian phallic symbols. See The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 328-30, 336.

[17] The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 268-72, 282-3. See also Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language (New York: Rinehart, 1951), pp. 28-31.

[18] The resurrection dream serves the purpose of denying death. See The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 242-60.

[19] W. David Sievers, "An Analysis of the Influence of Freudian Psychology on American Drama, 1909 - 1939," Ph. D. dissertation (U. of Southern California, 1955), p. 200.

[20] W. David Sievers, Freud on Broadway (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), p. 146.

[21] "American Theatre and the Human Spirit," in Horst Frenz, ed., American Playwrights on Drama (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), p. 117.

[22] Freud on Broadway, op. cit., pp. 85-6; "An Analysis of the Influence of Freudian Psychology on American Drama, 1909 - 1939," op. cit., p. 242.

[23] The Living Theatre (London: Heinemann, 1959), pp. 123-5.

[24] Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, Studies in Hysteria [trans. A. A. Brill] (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1936) [First English trans. 1909].

[25] Studies in Hysteria, esp. pp. 63, 83-6, 110-2, 150n.

[26] Freud first enunciated the "Oedipus complex" theory in The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 254-60. See also Totem and Taboo, op. cit., p. 202.

[27] Totem and Taboo, pp. 181-9.

[28] Elmer Rice, quoted by Heywood Broun in "The New Plays," New York World, 29 March 1923, p. 20.

[29] W. David Sievers was the first to notice the remarkable similarities between the social insights in The Adding Machine and the theoretical writings of Erich Fromm. Freud on Broadway, op. cit., p. 148.

[30] Erich Fromm's thesis is that, as long as the individual continues to yield to repressive external authority, he will never be a whole man, and he will never experience true freedom. See Man for Himself (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947), esp. pp. 221-2, 230, 246, 147-8, and The Sane Society (New York: Rinehart, 1955), pp. 120-51, 355-6.

[31] The Adding Machine ran for 72 performances; Roger Bloomer received 50. See Burns Mantle, ed., The Best Plays of 1922-23 (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1923), pp. 583, 585.

[32] John Corbin, "Expressionist Ibsen," New York Times, 6 Feb. 1923, p. 14; "Expressionism and 'Peer Gynt'," New York Times, 11 Feb. 1923, sec. VII, p. 1.

[33] John Corbin, "Expressionism and the Cartoon," New York Times, 1 April 1923, sec. VII, p. 1; "Expressionist New York," New York Times, 2 March 1923, p. 18; "The Theatre Guild Expands: Equity Expressionism," New York Times, 11 March 1923, sec. VIII, p. 1.

[34] Stark Young, "Forward Equity," New Republic, 21 March 1923, vol. 34, no. 433, pp. 100-1; "Marketing Expressionism," New Republic, 4 April 1923, vol. 34, no. 435, pp. 164-5.

[35] Ludwig Lewisohn, "Drama: Native Plays," The Nation, 21 March 1923, vol. 116, no. 3011, p. 346; "Drama: Creative Irony," The Nation, 4 April 1923, vol. 116, no. 3013, p. 399.

[36] "The Author Explains," New York Times, 18 March 1923, sec. VII, p. 2.

[37] "A Note from Elmer Rice," New York Times, 1 April 1923, sec. VII, p. 1.

[38] George Jean Nathan, "The Little Theatre Playwright," American Mercury, May 1926, vol. 8, p. 120.

[39] Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1925), p. 435.

[40] Clifford Leech, O'Neill (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 35.

[41] Dr. Valgemae's research into the "expressionist" background of Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine is the most extensive to date. His assumption of Lawson's interest in German expressionism is justified. In the case of Rice, however, he has been no more successful in linking the American writer with the German movement than any previous critic. See Accelerated Grimace (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp. 62-7, 72-7, and "Expressionism in American Drama," Ph. D. dissertation (University of Southern California, 1964), pp. 117-8, 121-2.

[42] Richard Peyron Brown, op. cit., p. 24. Failures would have appealed to Lawson and Dos Passos as a commentary upon the difficult situation of struggling young artists of the theatre. However, apart from the numerous scenes (fourteen) and the abstract names of some of the characters (the leading figures are called He and She), the play seems to have little in common with German expressionism or Roger Bloomer.

[43] "Expressionism in American Drama," op. cit., p. 121.

[44] Letter to J. Peirson, March 6, 1973.

[45] Brown, op. cit., pp. 18, 73-4; George A. Knox and Herbert M. Stahl, Dos Passos and "The Revolting Playwrights," (Upsala: Upsala University, 1964), pp. 40-1, 44-7.

[46] Walter Sokel points out that the Wagnerian leitmotif (a recurring musical theme) was adapted to drama by the expressionists in the form of a repeated phrase or metaphor. It may have been part of Lawson's concept of expressionism. Walter H. Sokel, The Writer in Extremis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 34.

[47] Letter to J. Peirson, March 6, 1973; Brown, op. cit., pp. 34-5.

[48] Elmer Rice, "Why He Selected The Adding Machine," in Whit. Burnett, ed., This is My Best (New York: Dial Press, 1942), pp. 459-60; The Living Theatre, op. cit., p. 123; Minority Report, op. cit., pp. 197-9; Elwood, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

[49] "Expressionism in American Drama," op. cit., p. 118.

[50] The Adding Machine meant a lot to Rice, personally. See Minority Report, op. cit., p. 199.

[51] Rice always distrusted the critics. See Minority Report, pp. 340-1; "Elmer Rice Says Farewell to Broadway," New York Times, 11 Nov. 1934, sec. IX, pp. 1, 3.

[52] Minority Report, pp. 85-6; Elmer Rice, "Extemporaneous Remarks Made at a Luncheon at the Hotel Savoy, London," The Shaw Review, Jan. 1957, vol. II, no. 1, pp. 5-7.

[53] Minority Report, pp. 127, 140-1.

[54] Minority Report, p. 57.

[55] Minority Report, pp. 63-4, 191.

[56] Minority Report, pp. 173-4, 185.

[57] He had also seen a production of Augustus Thomas' The Witching Hour. Minority Report, pp. 71, 110.

[58] Minority Report, pp. 110-11, 115.

[59] Except for a courtroom scene "in the beyond," Molnar's Liliom does not resemble The Adding Machine. Rice's reference to Spring Awakening and Liliom postdates the composition of The Adding Machine by several months. See "A Note from Elmer Rice," op. cit.; Burns Mantle, ed., "Liliom" [a paraphrase of Molnar's play], The Best Plays of 1920-21 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1943), pp. 162-95.

[60] Set designer Lee Simonson's interpretation of The Adding Machine contributed much to the reputation of the play as "expressionism." He replaced the "foolscap" wallpaper with projected images of numerals, the courtoom setting depicted a masked Judge and angular distortions of the walls and fixtures, and the last scene is played in front of an elaborate, oversized adding machine. For illustrations see Elmer L. Rice, The Adding Machine (New York: Samuel French, 1929), opposite pp. 3, 34, 54, 83, 124. See also Minority Report, p. 196, and Elwood, op. cit., p. 4.

[61] Minority Report, p. 203.

[62] The Subway has been accurately assessed by Frank Durham, Elmer Rice (New York: Twayne, 1970), pp. 69-74.

[63] Letter to J. Peirson, March 6, 1973.

[64] See John Howard Lawson, "On 'Processional'," New York Times, 1 Feb. 1925, sec. VII, p. 2.

[65] Processional has aroused considerable controversy. See "The Processional Controversy," New York Times, 8 Feb. 1925, sec. VII, p. 2; Brown, op. cit., pp. 68-9.

[66] Minority Report, pp. 407-8.

[67] Elmer Rice, Three Plays Without Words (New York: Samuel French, 1934). See Minority Report, pp. 236-7.

[68] Durham, op. cit., pp. 59-61; Freud on Broadway, op. cit., p. 153; W. E. Taylor, ed., Modern American Drama (De Land, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1968), pp. 5-11.

[69] Two other well-written plays by Rice are Counsellor-at-Law (1931) and Judgement Day (1934), both suspenseful and entertaining melodramas. Two volumes covering the writing career of Elmer Rice are available: Robert Hogan's The Independence of Elmer Rice (1965), op. cit., and Frank Durham's Elmer Rice (1970), op. cit. Durham's study provides the most objective and perceptive assessments of Rice's plays.

[70] The history of the New Playwrights Theatre has been documented in George A. Knox and Herbert M. Stahl, Dos Passos and "The Revolting Playwrights," (Upsala: Upsala University, 1964).

[71] Dos Passos and "The Revolting Playwrights," pp. 153-4.

CONCLUSION

The years between 1922 and 1929 are usually cited to define the expressionist period of American drama. Expressionism remained alive in the American theatre with the expansive mood of the 1920's during which experiments in non-realistic drama and themes of social reform usually aroused some popular interest. Toward the end of the decade, however, curiosity about expressionism began to wane. Americans had been enjoying a period of general prosperity and, partly because of this, the New Playwrights Theatre had been unable in three seasons to convince the public--including the political Left--that its themes of social revolution were vital. Expressionism with its technical handmaiden, "constructivism,"[1] suffered from its association with the shrillness and political radicalism of the New Playwrights Theatre. When the New Playwrights floundered in financial difficulties in the spring of 1929, a general economic depression was on the horizon: society was soon to become preoccupied with practical concerns, and the experimental theatre sank into oblivion, taking expressionism with it.[2]

At no time did non-realistic "expressionist" drama dominate the repertoire of American theatres on a level comparable to that of the expressionist period in the playhouses of post-war Germany. American dramatic expressionism was never a "movement" with a set of well-defined artistic principles and (except for the New Playwrights) a body of professed artist-practitioners.[3] Like many other developments of the 1920's, expressionism was a momentary fad: various American playwrights tried at least one experiment with what they considered to be

expressionism (or, at least, non-realistic drama), but soon abandoned it in favour of the more "acceptable" realistic forms. Apart from the plays covered in this paper, the best-remembered of the so-called expressionist dramas of the 1920's are Beggar on Horseback (1924), a collaboration of Marc Connelly and George S. Kaufman, Sophie Treadwell's Machinal (1928), and a play called Pinwheel (1927) by Francis Edwards Faragoh, one of the founders of the New Playwrights. Beggar on Horseback is an elaborate dream play, depicting the nightmare of a frustrated musician who has become involved in a love triangle that complicates his hopes to succeed as a composer. Both Machinal and Pinwheel are dramatizations of sexual psychology, using a variety of unorthodox theatrical devices to objectify the inner conflicts of the leading characters. All three of these plays show very little (if any) specific indebtedness to German expressionism, but they do share a distinctly American impulse to apply machine imagery in satirizing the technological dehumanization of modern men and women.[4]

This study shows that the development of "expressionism" in American playwriting was not initially a response to the expressionist style of German drama. Expressionism was first imported into the United States, not by the dramatists, but by a small clique of critics, set designers and advocates of theatre reform, men like Kenneth Macgowan, Robert Edmond Jones, Sheldon Cheney, John Corbin and Lee Simonson who, if not necessarily in direct contact with one another, constituted the core of the early journalistic fascination with the German movement. John Howard Lawson had been familiar with the drama of Wedekind from his college days before the War and his play Roger Bloomer reveals distinct traces of this German writer's influence.[5] The

Emperor Jones and The Adding Machine, however, were written before Eugene O'Neill or Elmer Rice had sustained an interest in Continental expressionism. Each of these plays represents its author's first attempt to compose a full-length non-realistic play and, as such, they were spontaneous acts of creation, representing the convergence of a number of personal experiences and beliefs with accumulated technical knowledge and the positive dramatic instincts of the authors.

The invasion of German expressionism into American playwriting can be traced, however, in the history of O'Neill and Rice as developing dramatists. The period between the first and second effort of each of these men to write a non-realistic play marks a significant increase in the American writers' conscious use of techniques of specifically German origin. The Emperor Jones and The Adding Machine are characterized by a pilgrimage-journey plot structure with the accompanying short scenes, dream devices and monologues, indicating mainly O'Neill's emulation of Strindberg and a possibility that Rice had a cursory knowledge of Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight. In addition to their basic Strindbergian properties, both of these plays exhibit devices, settings and motifs that are usually associated with productions on the expressionist stages of Germany. Critics of The Emperor Jones and The Adding Machine have identified, for instance, such devices as masks, imprisonment imagery, fragmented diction, striking, simplistic settings, and exaggerated gestures and movements as indications of the debt of these plays to German drama. However, in writing the plays, O'Neill and Rice seem to have employed these techniques with originality: imprisonment imagery followed naturally from O'Neill's desire to transmit a sense of the helplessness of Jones and his kind (the vision of slaves

in the hold of an "ancient vessel"), and Rice used it to amplify his "creature-on-display" treatment of Zero in the fifth scene of his play. Similarly, the choppy language, simplified settings and exaggerated, non-realistic actions of the characters reflect the authors' immediate interest in dramatic mood or satirical message: the speeches are the ravings of an irrational man or the platitudes of unthinking people; the settings are starkly simplified to terrorize the audience or to comment on middle class intellectual sterility; the compulsive and mechanistic movements of the characters were intended in each play to help demonstrate panic and confusion or to comment upon ignorance and human error.

However, when they wrote their second non-realistic dramas, both O'Neill and Rice, flattered by the success of their first efforts, felt the need to duplicate that success and approached their new plays with more deliberation and less inspiration. By this time each dramatist also had a "prepared" knowledge of German expressionist techniques with the result that The Hairy Ape and The Subway are relatively imitative, reflecting the stylistic precedent of the German drama. The Subway is a more obvious failure than The Hairy Ape because of the superficiality of Rice's attempt to insert German devices, particularly the mask, fragmented language, and the cage-prison motif, directly into a conventionally realistic and poorly executed melodrama. The exposure of Rice to the Theatre Guild production staff in the early months of 1923 undoubtedly constituted this writer's first comprehensive introduction to the intricacies of German expressionism and this becomes apparent when The Subway is compared with The Adding Machine.[6] Although O'Neill's interest in masks did not develop until immediately after he wrote The

Hairy Ape, his friendship with Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones was unquestionably the initial link between the dramatist and German expressionism. His deliberate use of cage-prison imagery, sharp dark-light contrasts, the antiphonal chorus and the affected gesture and pose in The Hairy Ape indicates that, by the fall of 1921, he had begun to share the "expressionistic" preoccupations of Macgowan and Jones. From this it becomes evident that, while native experiments in non-realistic drama were not in the first instance a response to German expressionism, the European movement soon overtook playwriting in the United States, contributed its name to contemporary criticism of the American plays, and began forthwith to be the assumed stylistic precedent for all such drama.

A decade before the popularization of expressionism in New York, a general spread of psychological knowledge was beginning to modify the content and form of American drama. By 1921 the infant science of psychology had introduced the concept of the "subconscious" (later, the "unconscious") and created a widespread public curiosity about the mysterious depths of the human psyche. At first only the content of popular drama showed the influence of psychology where psychiatrists and references to the new "mental healing" began to appear in the action and dialogue, but eventually American playwrights were encouraged to apply their conception of psychological experience to experiments in dramatic form, bringing a number of new non-realistic techniques into the drama. The introduction of psychoanalysis into the United States gave Americans an authoritative and workable description of "human nature" and, with the gradual deepening of the playwrights' knowledge of Freudian theory, the drama progressed from the superficial

pre-war dream plays of Broadway to the psychologically mature dramas of O'Neill, Lawson and Rice. Nevertheless, psychoanalysis formed only part of the creative genesis of such plays as The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Roger Bloomer and The Adding Machine. In the same way that the generic term "expressionism" leads to an overemphasis of the debt of American playwriting to German drama, it also would be misleading to describe these plays as examples of "psychoanalytic drama." When Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine were first presented in New York, local audiences were not being treated to either Americanized German expressionism or dramatized Freud: they were witnessing the first--and the best--of the original "psychological dramas" of the American theatre.

NOTES

[1] The American usage of "constructivism" to characterize the unorthodox staging techniques of the New Playwrights constitutes a drastic reduction of the original significance of the term as it relates to the theatrical experiments of V. Meyerhold in Russia. Meyerhold's non-representational style informed and inspired American set designers but, in time, the national origins of constructivism tended to be forgotten. See George A. Knox and Herbert M. Stahl, Dos Passos and "The Revolting Playwrights" (Upsala: Upsala University, 1964), pp. 16-19; Lee Simonson, The Stage is Set (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1963), pp. 62, 119.

[2] See Knox and Stahl, pp. 151-4.

[3] The difficulties inherent in describing German expressionism itself as a "movement" are discussed by John Willett, Expressionism (New York: McGraw - Hill, 1970), pp. 6-9.

[4] Americans in particular seemed to be fascinated with man-as-machine imagery in the 1920's and 1930's. The theme of the little man "crushed" by the machinery of capitalist technology is best-remembered in connection with Rice's The Adding Machine and the Charlie Chaplin film, Modern Times (1936).

[5] As a college student in 1913 Lawson undoubtedly encountered Wedekind as part of the avant garde of European drama but, at the time, he probably did not link this writer with the term "expressionism" which did not become part of popular currency even in Germany until after 1919. See Willett, op. cit., pp. 124, 152-8.

[6] Since The Subway is not discussed in detail in this paper, the reader can use the following summary of the techniques cited in the text with page references from the original publication of the play:

Elmer L. Rice. The Subway: A Play in Nine Scenes (New York: Samuel French, 1929).

masks ..... p. 31.
cage-prison imagery ..... p. 45.
fragmented diction ..... pp. 50-5.
antiphonal chorus ..... pp. 121-35.
angular sets ..... p. 3.
sharp dark-light contrasts ..... pp. 27, 49, 59.
affected gesture and pose ..... p. 49.

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